Vol.13

ROKUDA NOBORU

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VOL.13

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FACETIOUS PHOENIX

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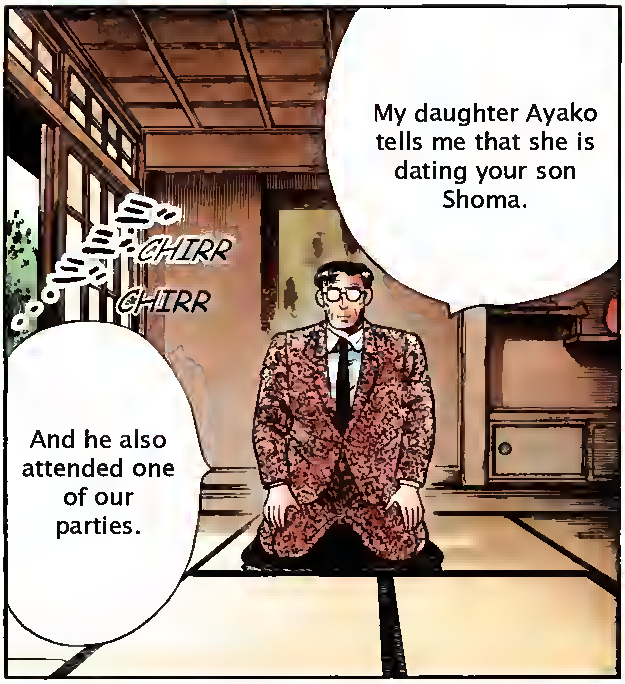
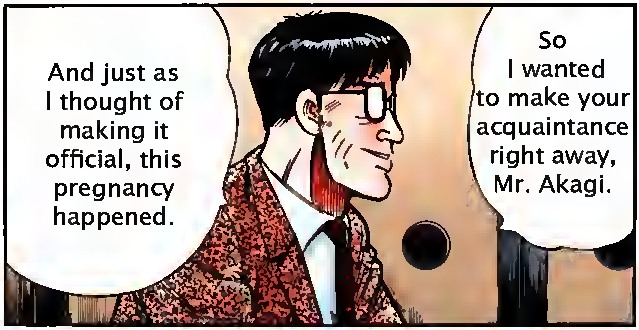
Chapter 1: Behind the Scenes
Chapter 2: Wasteland
Chapter 3: Facetious Phoenix
Chapter 4: The Collision
Chapter 5: Meeting of Fate
Chapter 6: The 53rd Divorce
Chapter 7: Foot in the Door
Chapter 8: Revelation
Chapter 9: River of No Return
Chapter 10: Cry of Decision
Chapter 11: Flames
Chapter 12: Turning Point

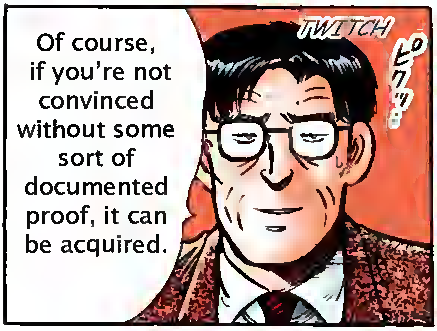
Chapter 1:
Behind the Scenes

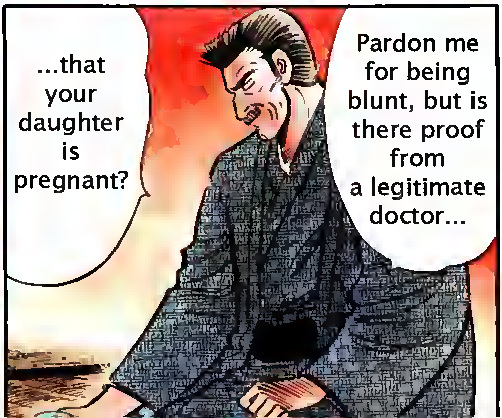

My daughter Ayako tells me that she is dating your son Shoma.
CHIRR
CHIRR
And he also attended one of our parties.

CHIRREEE
CHIRREEE
CHIRREEE
CHIRREEE
CHIRREEE

SIP


And just as I thought of making it official, this pregnancy happened.
So I wanted to make your acquaintance right away, Mr. Akagi.

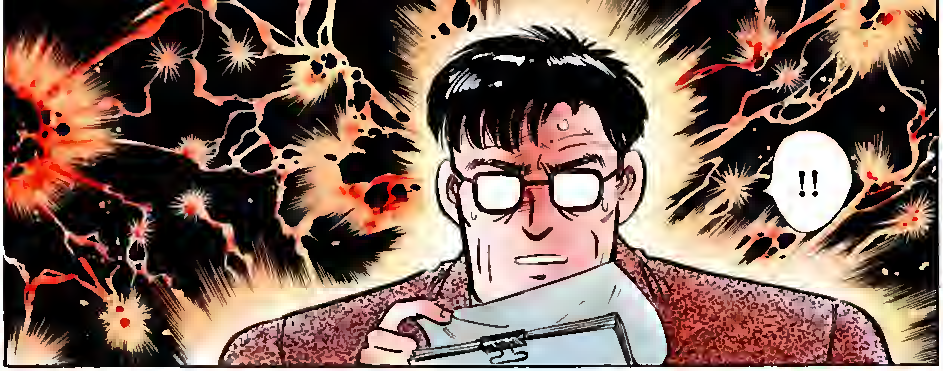

Of course, if you're not convinced without some sort of documented proof, it can be acquired.
TWITCH


...that your daughter is pregnant?
Pardon me for being blunt, but is there proof from a legitimate doctor...

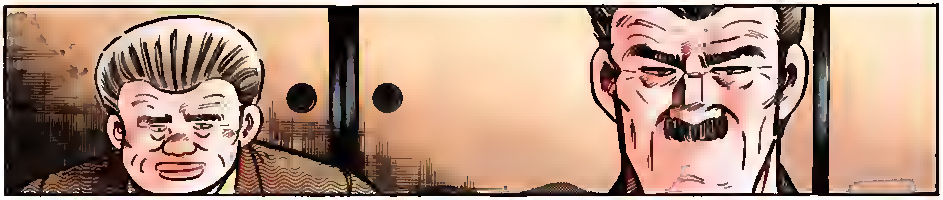
It's just that a lot of women out there are after men like Shoma for their own selfish interests.
No, that was rude of me.
Please don't take this wrong, since it's not that I don't trust you Mr. Fujino.
Accusing my daughter of such a thing!
H...How dare you!
Didn't I?
GLARE
I warned you not to take this wrong.
When I was strong, virile young buck in my prime...
To be honest, I expected Shoma to have sown a hell of a lot more oats by now, being a son of mine.
...I believe he needs to sow his wild oats.
But for a boy to grow into a man...
GRRR

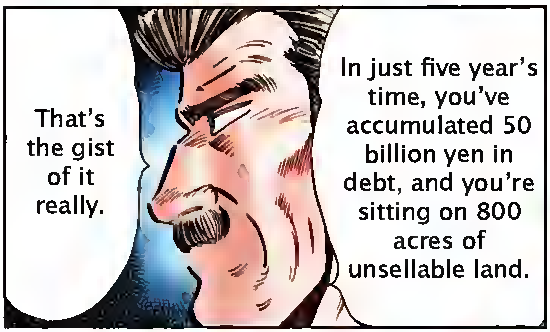
How can you say that!?
Ha ha ha ha ha ha...
...I'd get women pregnant right and left!
...
You ought to be ashamed, Mr. Akagi!
SLAM
I'm appalled at your vulgar manner of speaking!
And since you're also a parent...
Which is why I wanted to meet with you, as a parent considering this young couple's feelings for one another.
...I believe his feelings for my daughter are of a pure nature, just as she loves him.
Shoma is a very... I mean, it's Shoma that I...

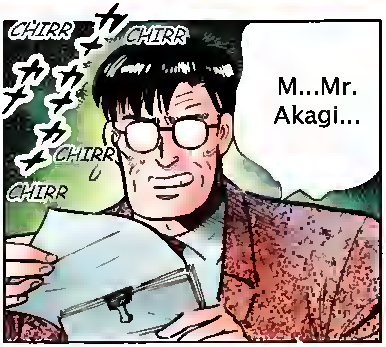
I'm extremely disappointed in you, sir.
As if you're cheapening their genuine feelings for one another.
...I'm shocked at your derisive behavior.
Yes sir.
Kasai ...
FWOOSH
?
Yes sir.
Show him, Kasai.
As a parent myself, of course I'm concerned about my son.
Excuse me.

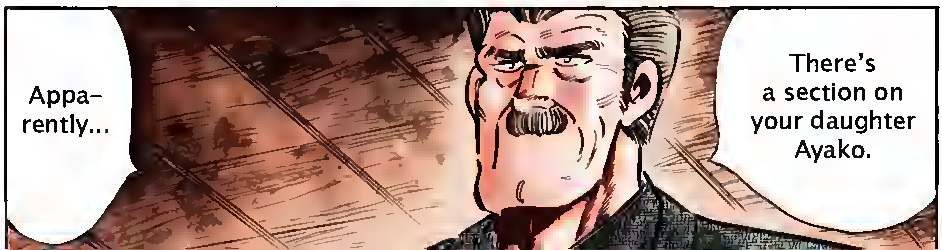


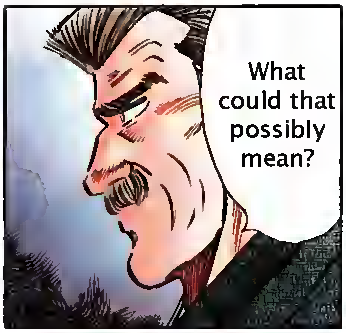
* Comprehensive Report on Fujino Industries Ltd.: Business Analysis Covering the Past 5 Years

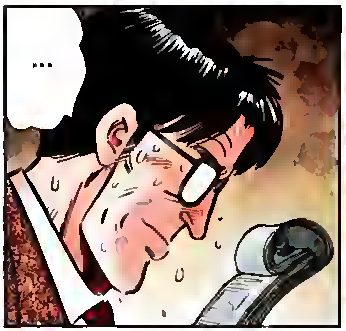


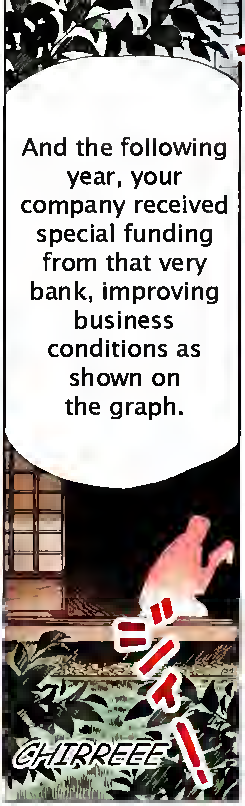

That's the gist of it really.
In just five year's time, you've accumulated 50 billion yen in debt, and you're sitting on 800 acres of unsellable land.



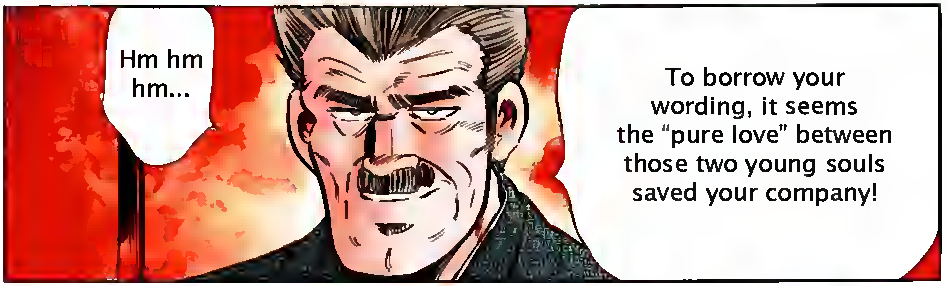



What could that possibly mean?

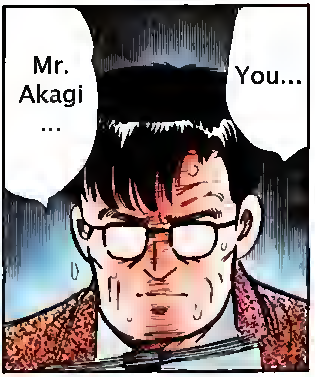

...

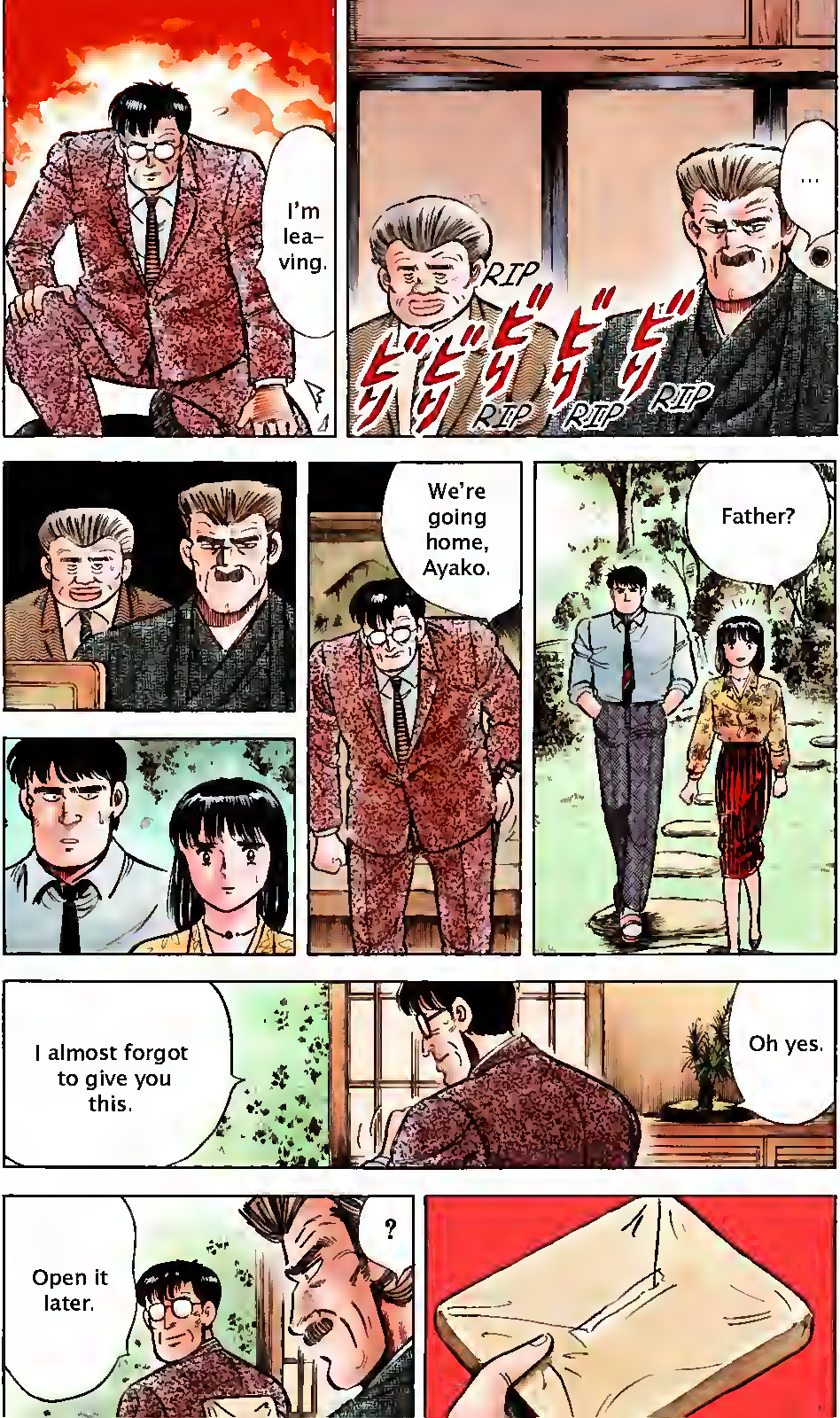

And the following year, your company received special funding from that very bank, improving business conditions as shown on the graph.
CHIRREEE

CHIRR
CHIRR
...Ayako was involved with the son of a reputable bank president some three years ago, and claimed to be pregnant at that time.
CHIRR
CHIRR
But in the end, no proposal for marriage was made.
CHIRREE CHIREE CHIREEE


Hm hm hm...
To borrow your wording, it seems the "pure love" between those two young souls saved your company!

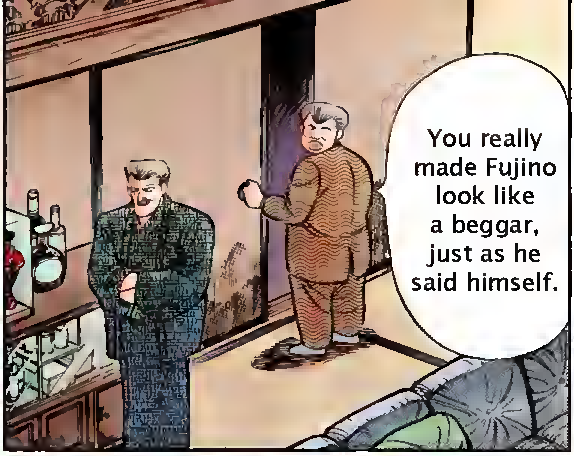
And I'll never forgive you for this.
I've never been so insulted in my life.
RIP


Mr. Akagi ...
You...

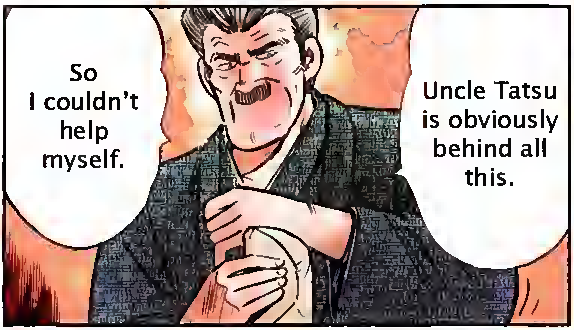

I'm lea-ving.
...
RIP
ビビビビビ
RIP RIP RIP
We're going home, Ayako.
Father?
I almost forgot to give you this.
Oh yes.
Open it later.
?

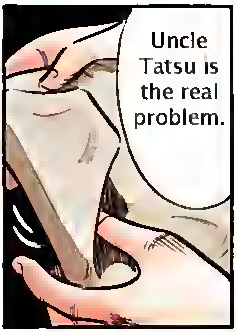
You have no right to call me that!
You should have at least stayed for lunch... Dad.
...
What's wrong, Father?
...!?
Insulting me with your rude tone, and treating me as some sort of... petty beggar.
You'll regret what you've done today.
I've got one more thing to say to you, Akagi.
You'll regret it.
Father...
I'll make sure!

...
Come on, Father.
...
パーン
SMACK
What the hell happened, Dad?
Falling for a damn gold digger.
You idiot.
...


You really made Fujino look like a beggar, just as he said himself.

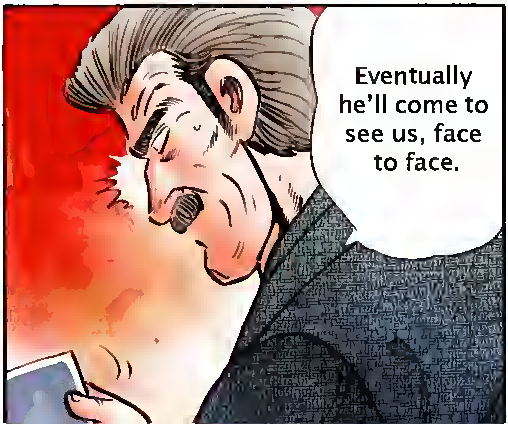
CHIRR
That was pretty harsh.
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
And unex-pected.

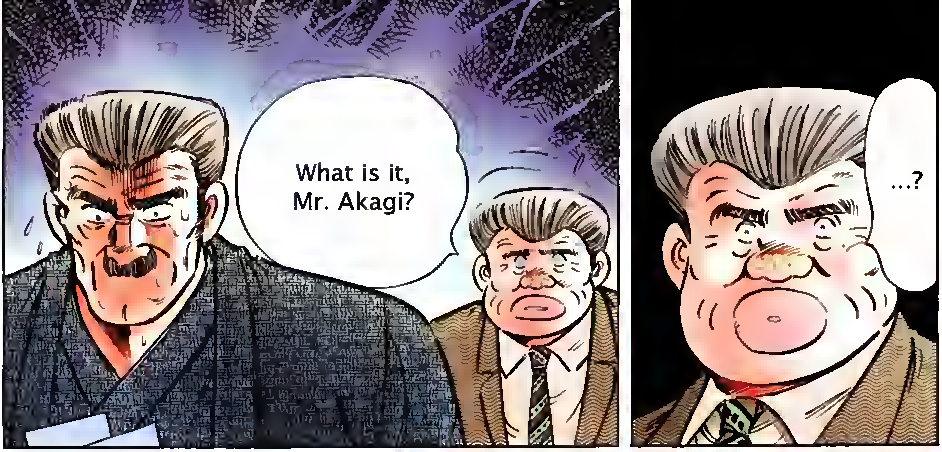

So I couldn't help myself.
Uncle Tatsu is obviously behind all this.

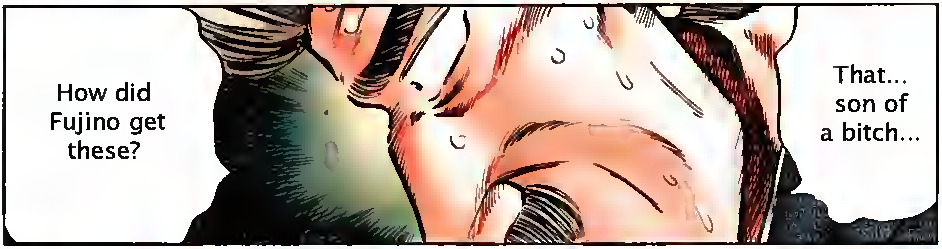

Uncle Tatsu is the real problem.

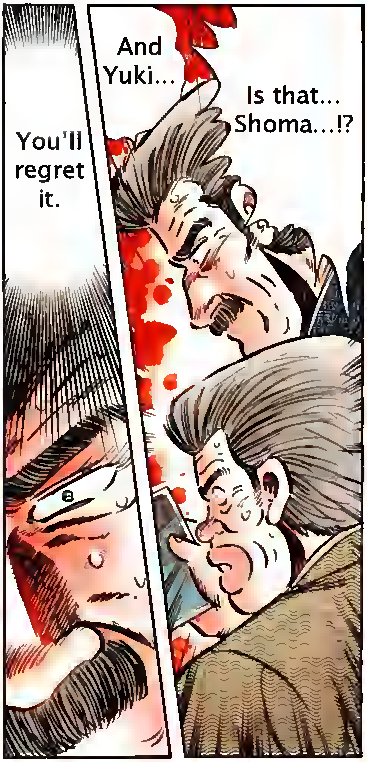
No, he wouldn't go that far. My gut says he wants to sell us some of that useless land of his.
What could Fujino be after? A piece of Akagi Group?

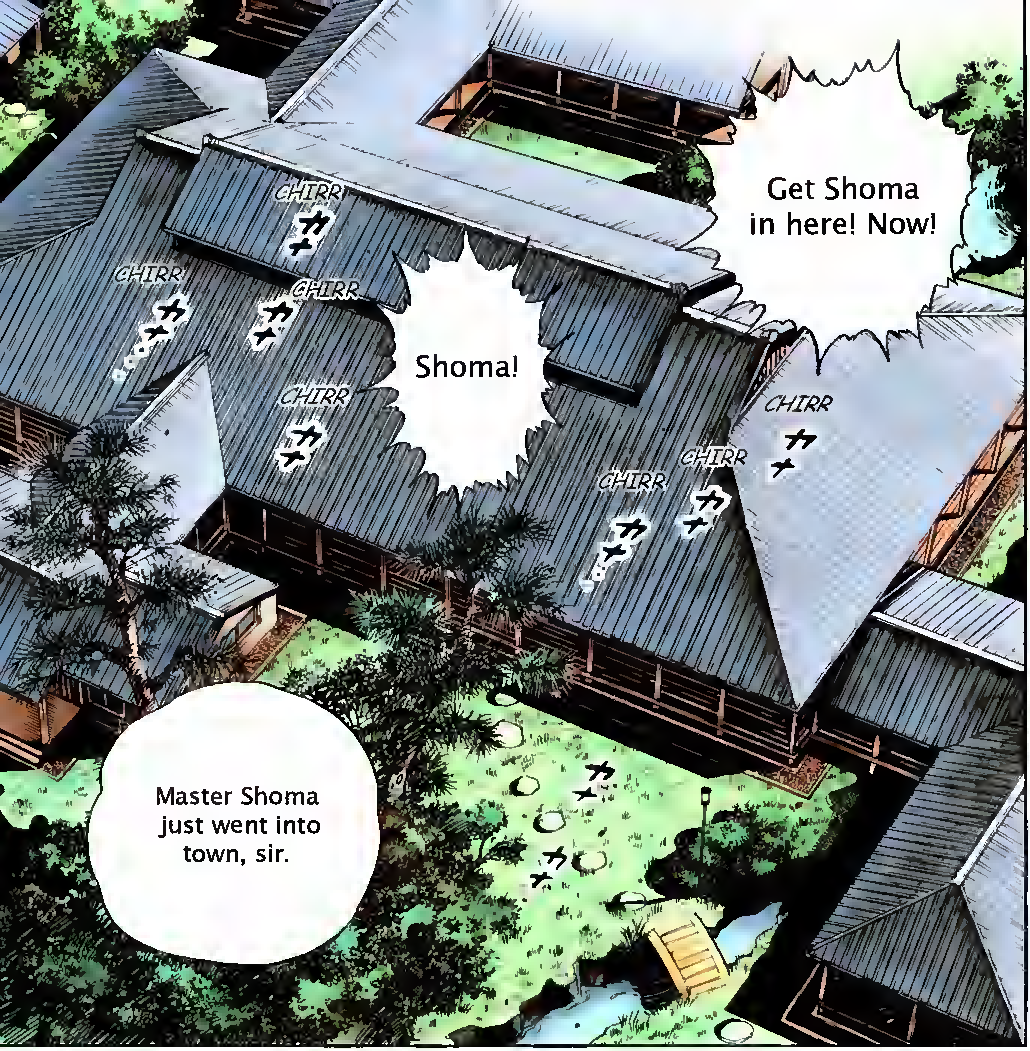
!?
Now that you mention it, he hasn't shown himself in years.

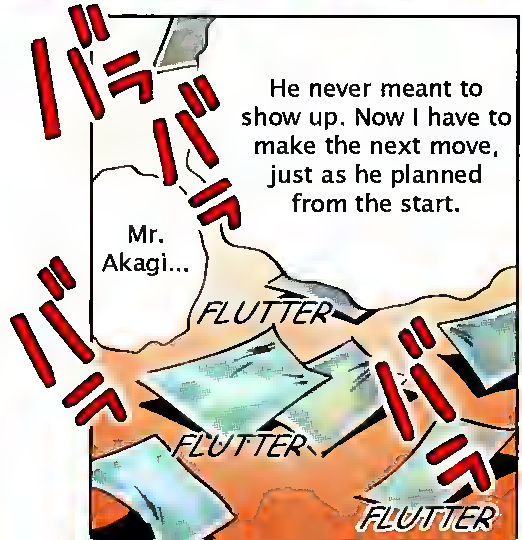

Eventually he'll come to see us, face to face.

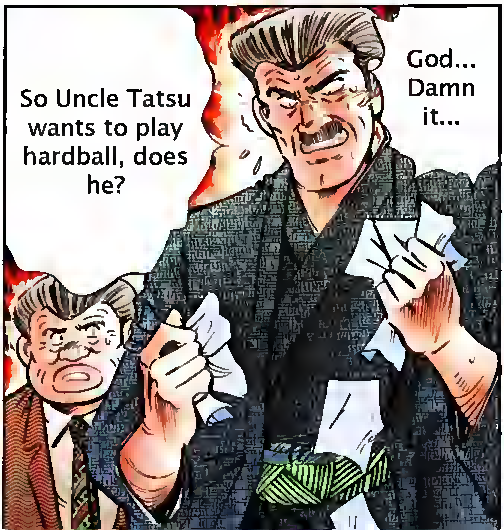

What is it, Mr. Akagi?
...?

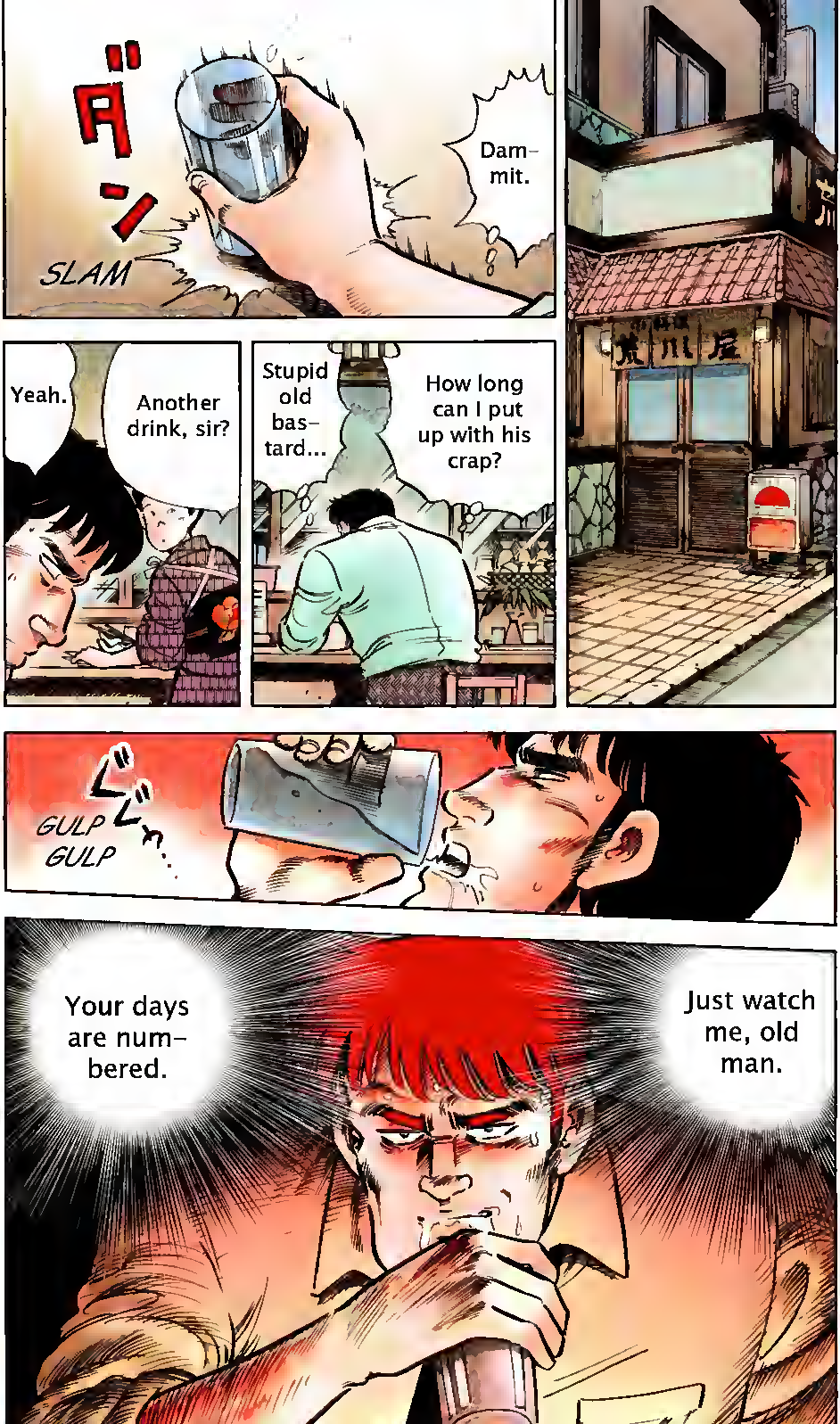

How did Fujino get these?
That... son of a bitch...


You'll regret it.
And Yuki...
Is that... Shoma...!?


CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
Get Shoma in here! Now!
Shoma!
Master Shoma just went into town, sir.


He never meant to show up. Now I have to make the next move, just as he planned from the start.
Mr. Akagi...
FLUTTER
FLUTTER
FLUTTER

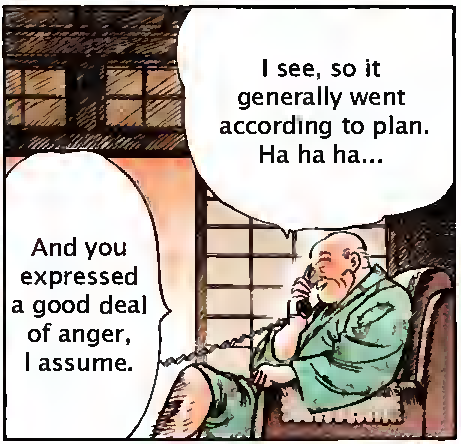

So Uncle Tatsu wants to play hardball, does he?
God... Damn it...

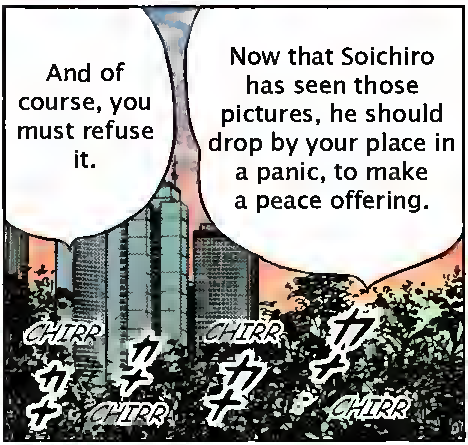

ダン
SLAM
Dam-
mit.
Yeah.
Another drink, sir?
Stupid old bas-tard...
How long can I put up with his crap?
GULP GULP
Your days are num-bered.
Just watch me, old man.

Hello? Speaking...
Well hello, Fujino.

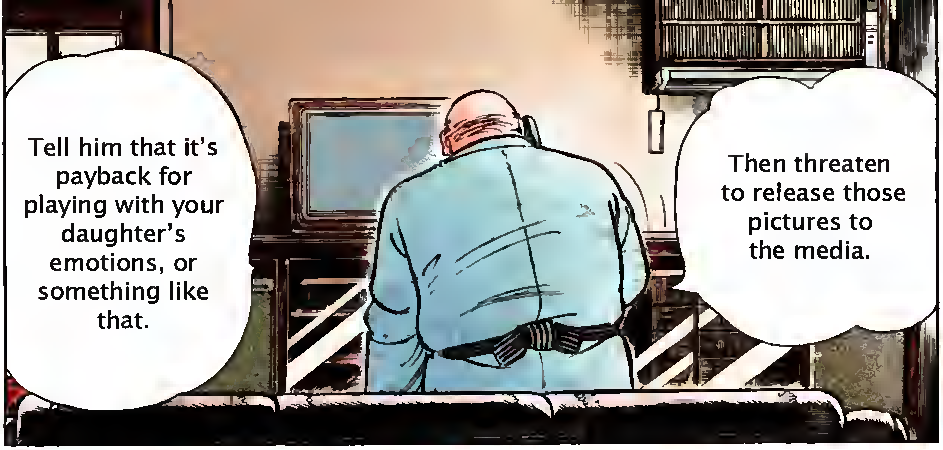
CHIRR CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
RRRRRING
RRRRRING

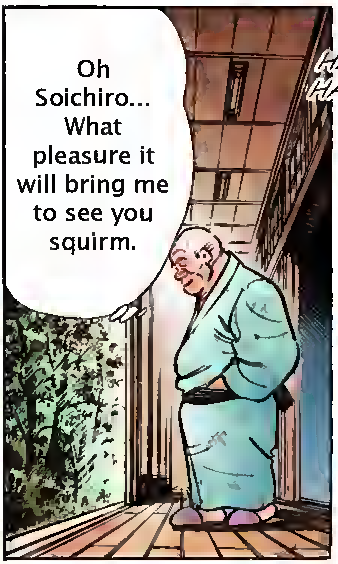
Oh really? He genuinely pissed you off? Ha ha ha!
The more anger on your part the better.


I see, so it generally went according to plan. Ha ha ha...
And you expressed a good deal of anger, I assume.


And of course, you must refuse it.
Now that Soichiro has seen those pictures, he should drop by your place in a panic, to make a peace offering.
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR

Job well done, sir! Ha ha ha!
Then you didn't have to put on an act.


Tell him that it's payback for playing with your daughter's emotions, or something like that.
Then threaten to release those pictures to the media.


Oh Soichiro... What pleasure it will bring me to see you squirm.

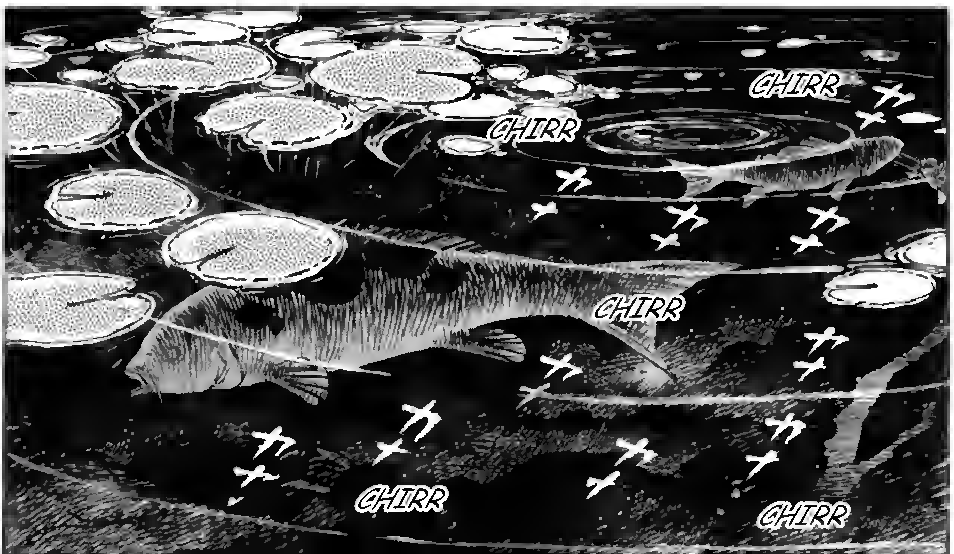
HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA

A scandal just before the election would kill his campaign, after all.
At that point, he'll be willing to do anything for your forgiveness.
Just as we planned.

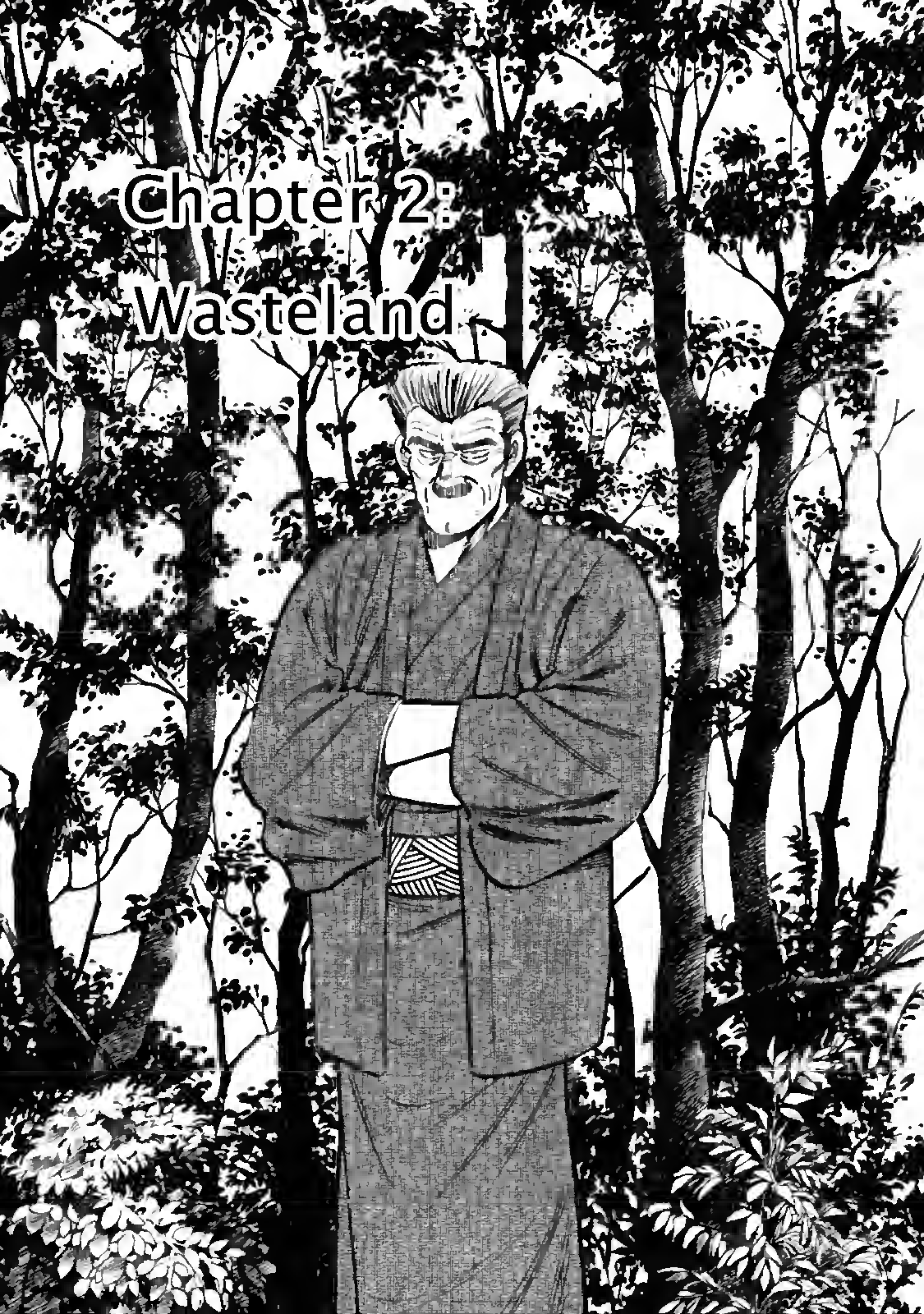
...is to wait...
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
The next step...

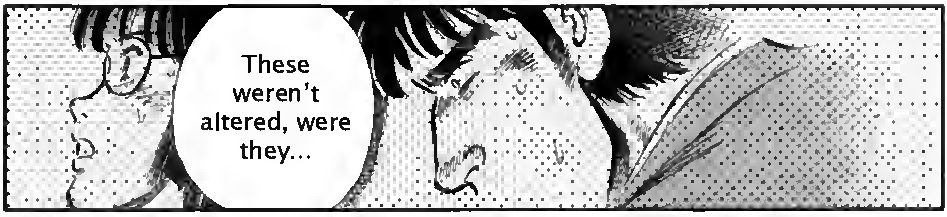
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
...for you to pay me a visit.

CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR


CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR
CHIRR

VOL.13


Chapter 2:
Wasteland


These weren't altered, were they...

The first plan of action is to get those negatives.
And we have to do anything it takes to keep them from going public.
Stupid kid.

We know that Fujino got a hold of them.
That's not important.

Who could have been taking these in secret?
No...

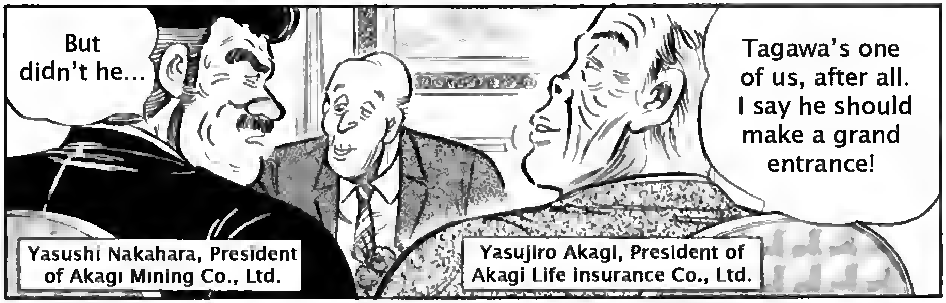
There will be hell to pay for you, and for the entire Akagi Group. Even if you deny having anything to do with Yuki's suicide...
Do you realize what'll happen if the public gets word of your relationship with this maid, who jumped to her death from our building?
...but you'll have no chance with the election.
The company can take a punch and get through it...
But you'll be hit the hardest, won't you dad!
Akagi Group's reputation will be ruined by a series of slanderous claims.
...no one will believe you.
You're the one who pissed him off after all, not me!
I'm going to pay Mr. Fujino a visit, and find out where those pictures came from!

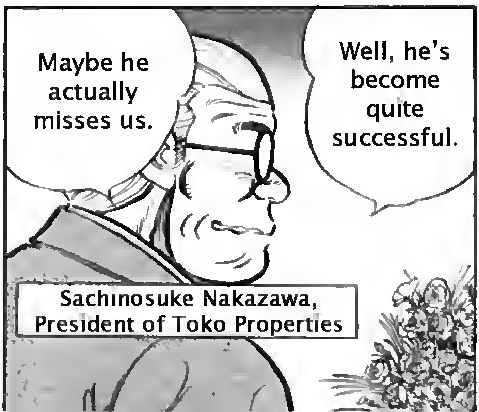
We'll have to meet with Uncle Tatsu.
What should we do now?
SLAM
Do you think he'll even meet with us?
TAP TAP
And have him ask Fujino to forgive us.
My gut tells me these photos, Fujino's anger, and this whole debacle was arranged by Uncle Tatsu.
Then he's...
Huh?
It's all part of his plan.
There's no doubt in my mind.

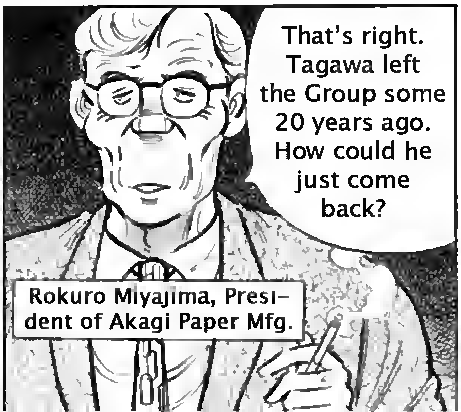
Or pressure Fujino through his lenders. That would be easy for you.
Please don't go, sir!
You can ask someone else to go in your place! That's what connections are for!
Right. His plan for revenge is just getting started, for what happened 20 some odd years ago.
Then aren't you playing into his hands by going to see him?
To make it seem as if Fujino gave me these pictures with good intentions.
Uncle Tatsu would probably have him claim they were sent to him anonymously, by someone trying to ruin the relationship between Shoma and his daughter.
That won't work. Fujino would never admit to taking these pictures.
Damn you, Uncle Tatsu...
Mr. Akagi...
As long as Fujino sticks to that story, we shouldn't make any risky moves.

CHIRREEE
CHIRREEE
CHIRREEE
Akagi Group's "Wednesday Meeting"
of Company Presidents

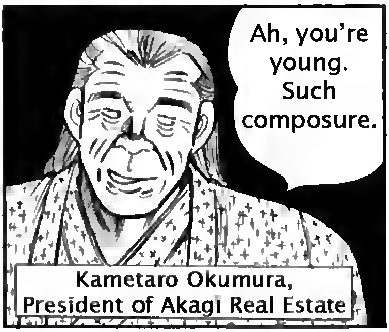
Is that so? Tatsu's coming back, is he?


But didn't he...
Yasushi Nakahara, President of Akagi Mining Co., Ltd.
Tagawa's one of us, after all. I say he should make a grand entrance!
Yasujiro Akagi, President of Akagi Life Insurance Co., Ltd.

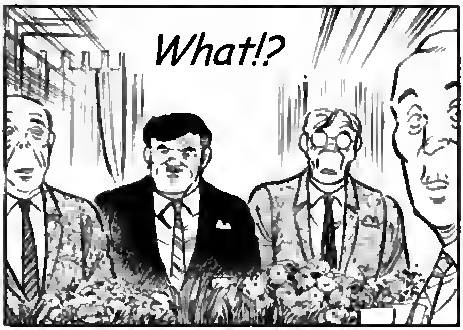

Maybe he actually misses us.
Well, he's become quite successful.
Sachinosuke Nakazawa, President of Toko Properties


That's right. Tagawa left the Group some 20 years ago. How could he just come back?
Rokuro Miyajima, President of Akagi Paper Mfg.

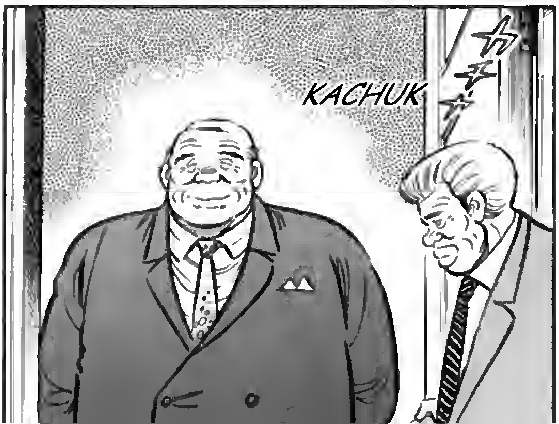
YAK
YAK
YAK
YAK

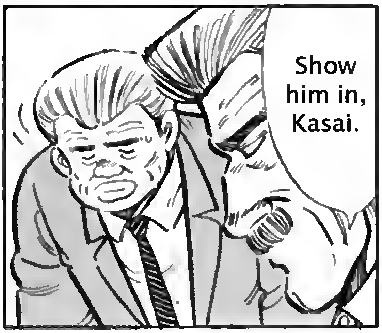

Ah, you're young. Such composure.
Kametaro Okumura, President of Akagi Real Estate

I think it would be beneficial to have him join our Wednesday Meeting.
I've heard a lot about Mr. Tagawa's accomplish-ments.
Hiroyuki Tsukada, President of Akagi Construction


What!?

Actually, he's already with us today.

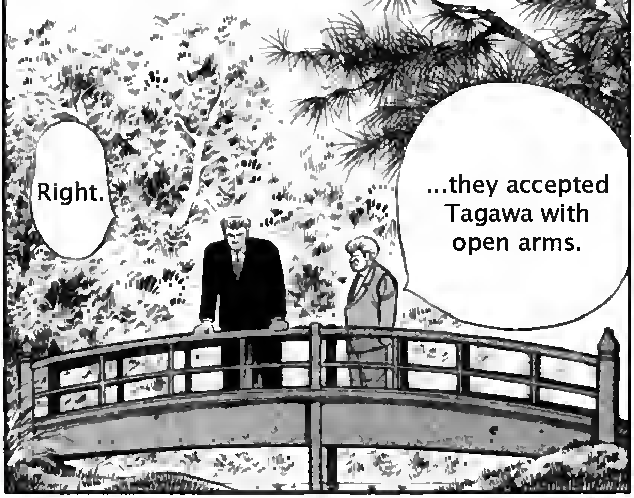

KACHUK


Show him in, Kasai.

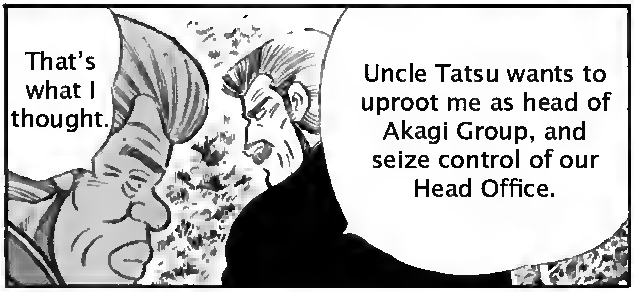
But we're always talking about you.
Just like old times. We haven't seen you in ages.
わっはっはっは…
HA HA HA HA HA
If it isn't Tatsu! How've you been, old friend?

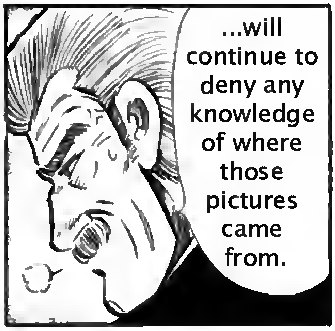
You don't realize how happy I was to be invited by Soichiro.
はっはっはっは
HA HA HA HA
Well I've been wanting to see you fellas too.

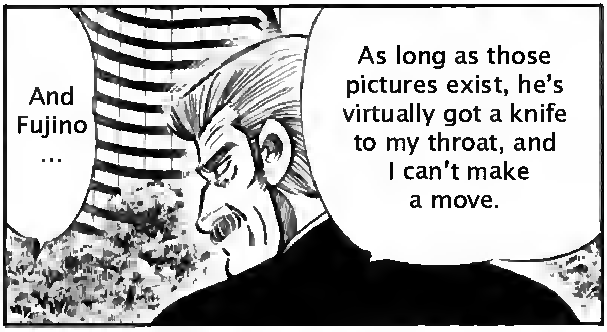
...


Right.
...they accepted Tagawa with open arms.

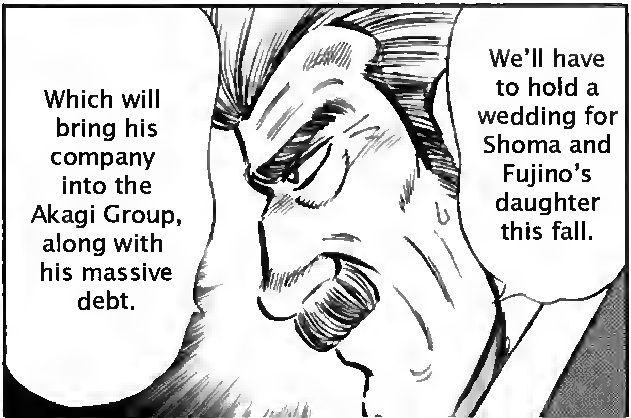
So then...


That's what I thought.
Uncle Tatsu wants to uproot me as head of Akagi Group, and seize control of our Head Office.


...will continue to deny any knowledge of where those pictures came from.

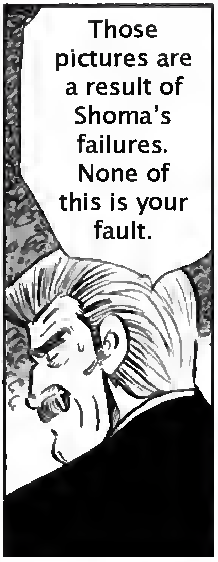

And Fujino ...
As long as those pictures exist, he's virtually got a knife to my throat, and I can't make a move.

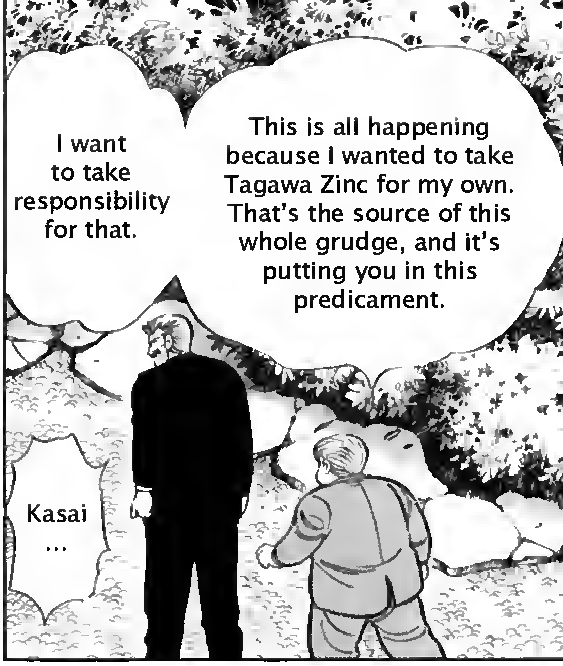
I see.

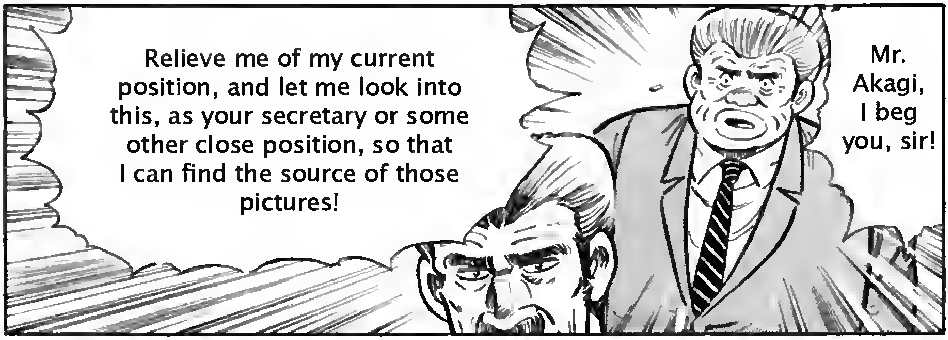

Which will bring his company into the Akagi Group, along with his massive debt.
We'll have to hold a wedding for Shoma and Fujino's daughter this fall.

...if you'll fire me.
I'm wondering...
I have a favor to ask of you, sir.
!?
...it's not necessary.
If this is because of Uncle Tatsu...
Yes.
You want to step down as president of Toho Chemicals?
What? What's this about, Kasai?
Don't feel sorry for that old man!
You worked your ass off developing an irrelevant Tagawa Zinc into one of Akagi Group's top five corporations.
I'm not concerned about his feelings.
That's not it, sir.

But I can't let that man get away with such filthy tactics!


Those pictures are a result of Shoma's failures. None of this is your fault.


I want to take responsibility for that.
This is all happening because I wanted to take Tagawa Zinc for my own. That's the source of this whole grudge, and it's putting you in this predicament.
Kasai ...


Relieve me of my current position, and let me look into this, as your secretary or some other close position, so that I can find the source of those pictures!
Mr. Akagi, I beg you, sir!

Kasai...

And my wife passed away last year, so there's no reason for me to continue.
I wasn't able to have any children, so there's no one to inherit my business.

...
Please Mr. Akagi!
Let me work as your right hand man again!

Kasai...
Remember when we reunited in Tokyo some 42 years ago?

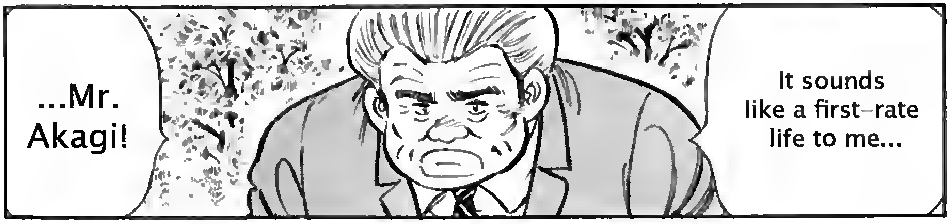
The city was a real hell hole back then. A barren wasteland.

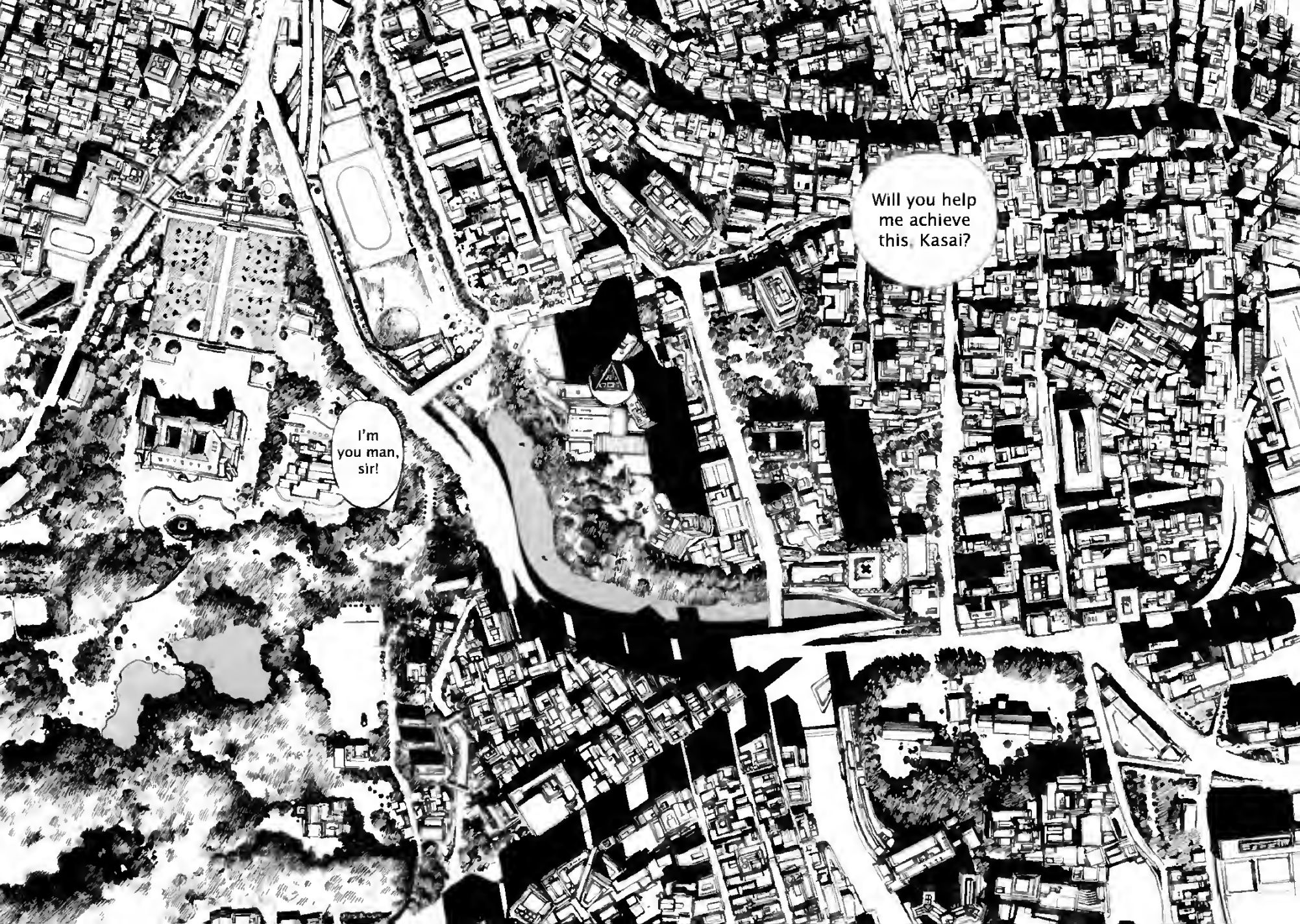
...and Tokyo has developed beyond our wildest dreams.
Then before we know it, 42 years roll by...

...
...it's still a waste-land!
But from where I stand...

HA HA
HA HA
Do you know why I'm getting into politics?
Kasai...

I'll do whatever it takes to make those flowers blossom here!
...I want to make Japan a better country!
HA HA HA HA
Because now, more than ever before...

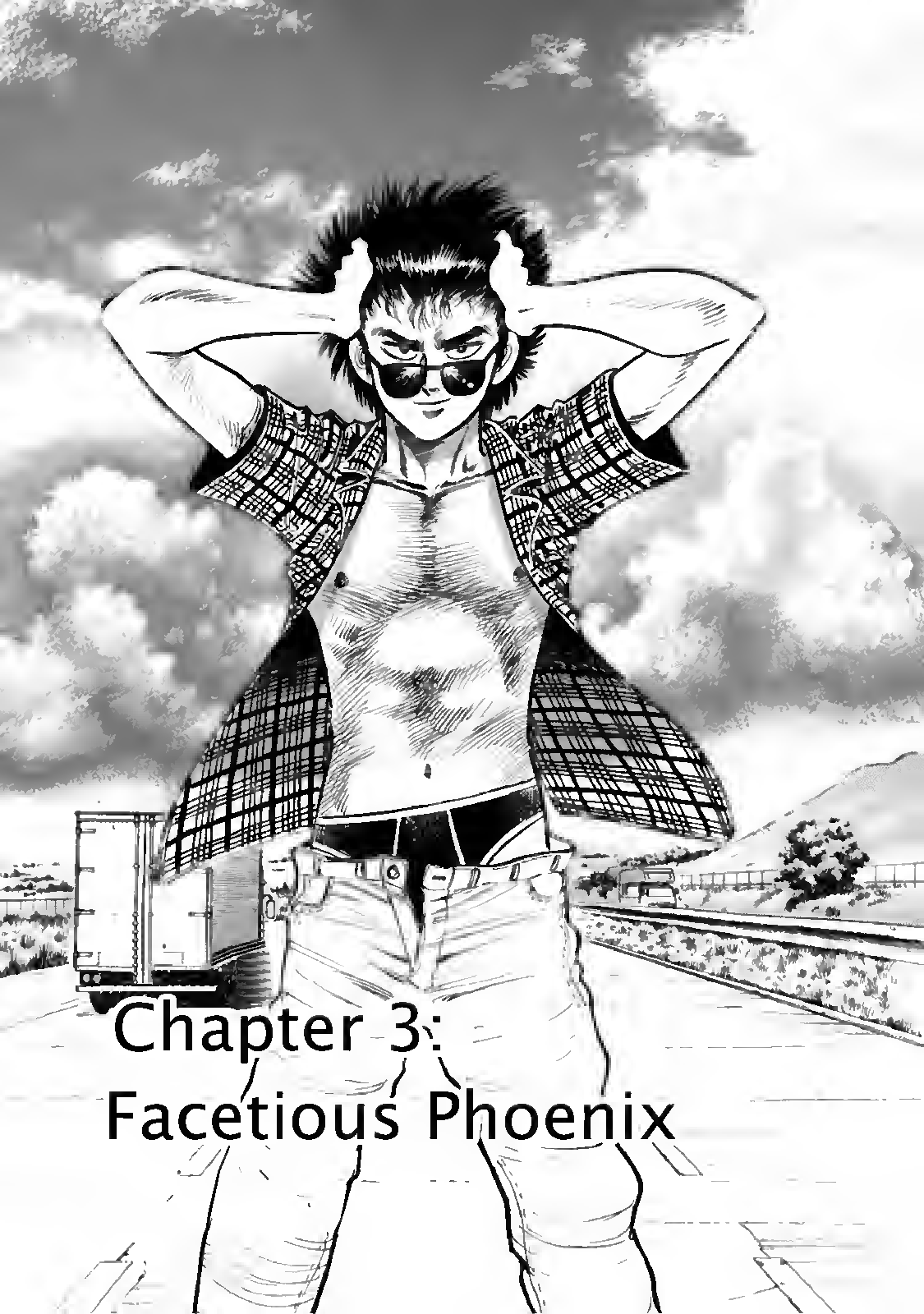

...Mr. Akagi!
It sounds like a first-rate life to me...


Will you help me achieve this, Kasai?
I'm you man, sir!

Will you help me achieve this, Kasai?

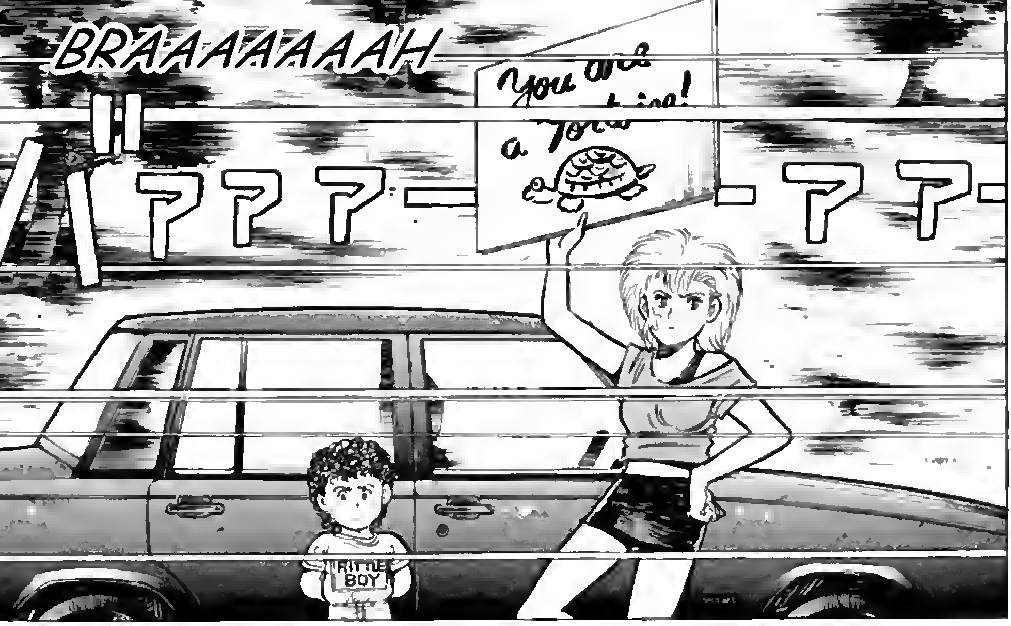
I'm you man, sir!

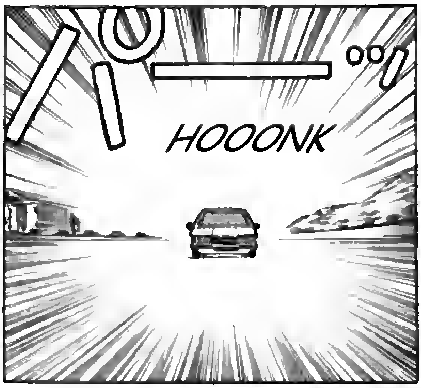
F
VOL.13

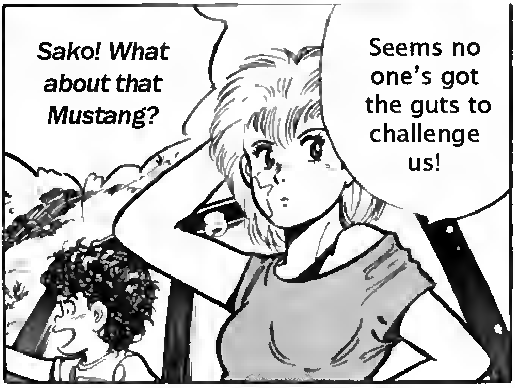


Chapter 3: Facetious Phoenix

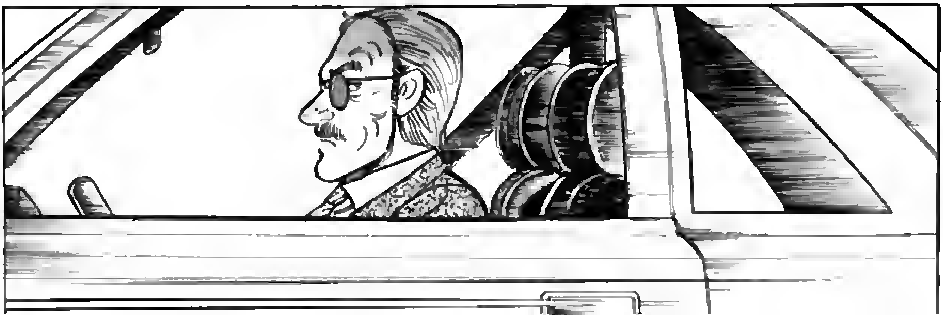
England's
Motorway
WHOOSH
VRRRRRR
You are a Tortoise!


BRAAAAAAAAH
アアアー
アアー
You are a tortoise!
LITTLE BOY


HOOONK


Sako! What about that Mustang?
Seems no one's got the guts to challenge us!

You are a Tortoise!



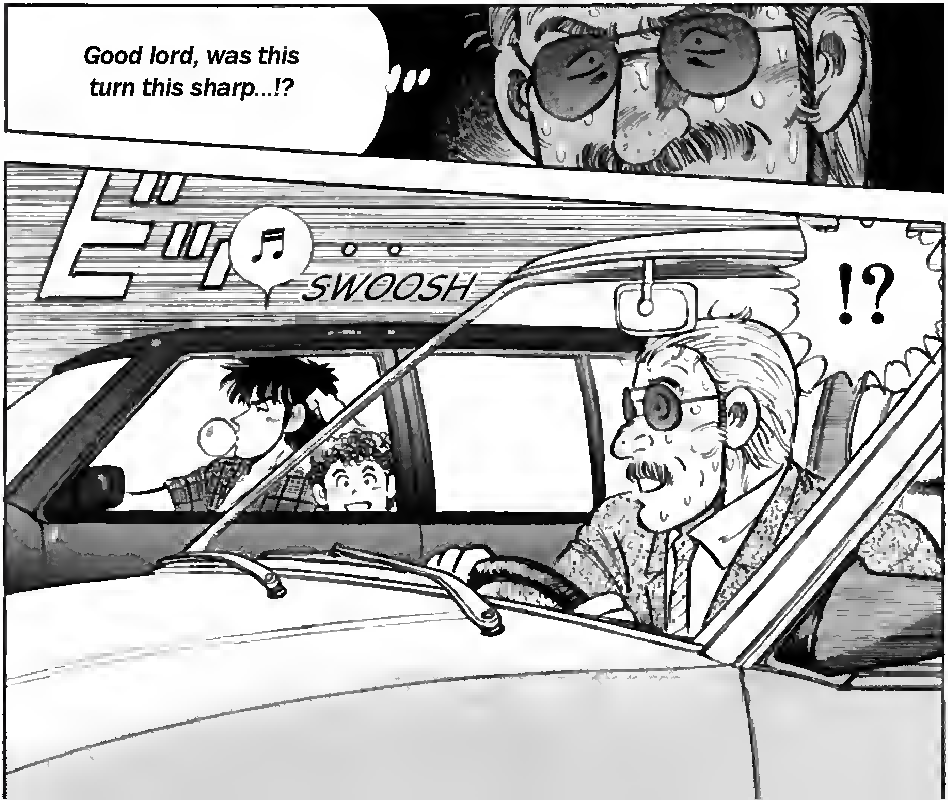
From the frying pan...
VROOOM!
Yes!
SCREE
SCREE
SCREECH
SCREEEETCH!
...fire.
...into the...
The first one to make it to that restaurant 10 kilometers from here wins 200 pounds!
Okay Gunma!
VROOM
Let's do this.
SLURP
Sweet.
SWIP

Ready, and... GO!
BRAAAAAAAH

Just enjoy the ride.
I've got this.
We don't even have 200 pounds to give him, so you better win!
Come on, Gunma! Faster!
...I'm a former racer.
After all...
Peabow, how much horspower does a Mustang have, anyway?
Ha ha ha! Looks like I'll be 200 pounds richer today, silly kid! My car can clearly outperform yours!
It's a V6, with 135 horsepower.
What about this Volvo?
About 220, I think. With a V8 engine.
SHOOOOOOM

VEEEEEEH
CRITCH
The hell we don't.
His car has 85 more horsepower!? We don't stand a chance!
Ama teurs like him...
I'll bet he don't know how to take full advantage of that car.
VROOOOOOOH
...he don't got what it takes to milk that thing for what it's worth.
Bumps in the road...

CLENCH
BUMP
BUMP
...visual differences when driving at high speeds...
SHOOM


Good lord, was this turn this sharp...!?
SWOOSH
!?

Look out.
VWOOSH
!!
SCREEEEEECH
OH MY GOD !

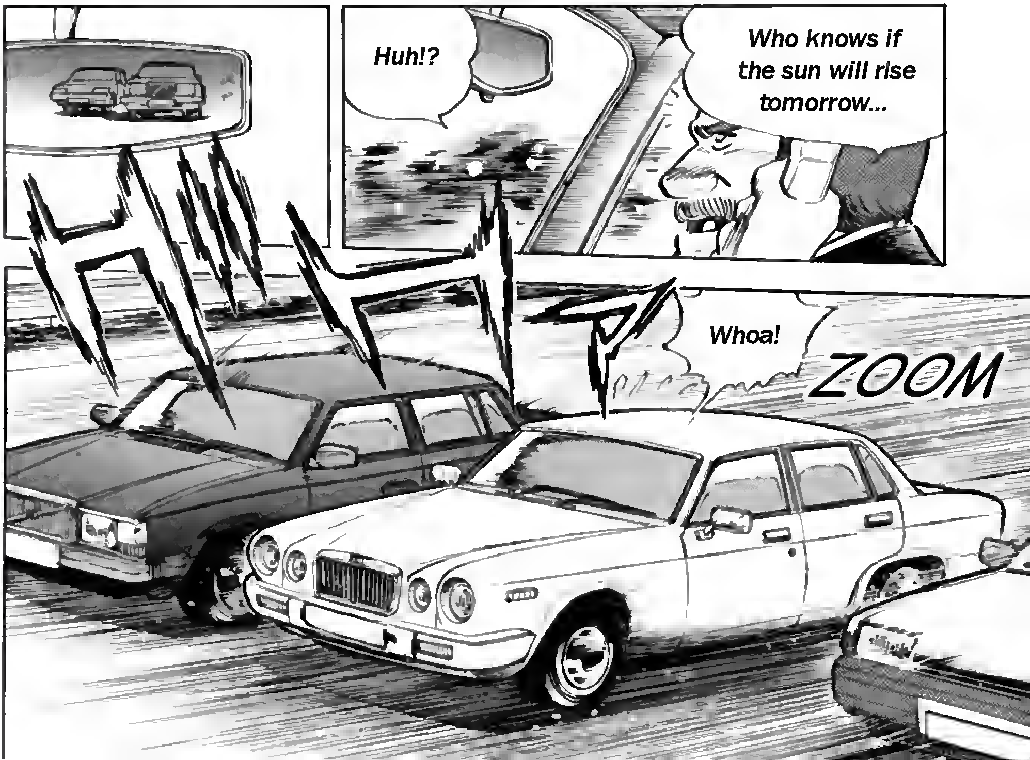
Heh heh ...
Sorry, dude. Nice car though.
Scratchwood Services
I'm warning you, kid! My mates call me Brakeless Joe, and you're about to find out why!
Gunma, we've got your next victim.
No no no! 200 pounds! No more, no less! Ha ha ha!
Sako, lower the bet! This guy is crazy!
Let's go!
♬
GRIN

ZOOM
IRRK
Holy...!
200 pounds!
HA HA HA HA
ZOOM
200 pounds!
ZOOM

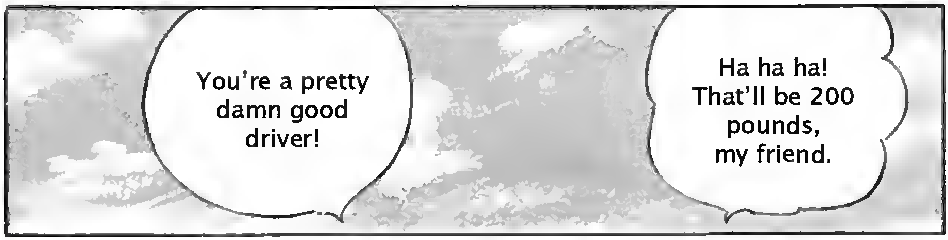
I could only describe it as the devil's work.
Who'd expect a truck accident?

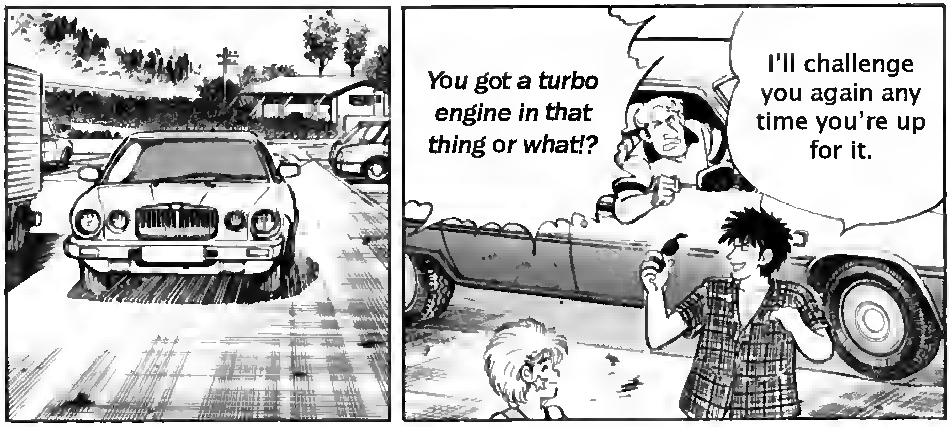
This world we live in is full of surprises.

He was a bright kid, and had the talent.
Right, the circuit was a walk in the park for him.

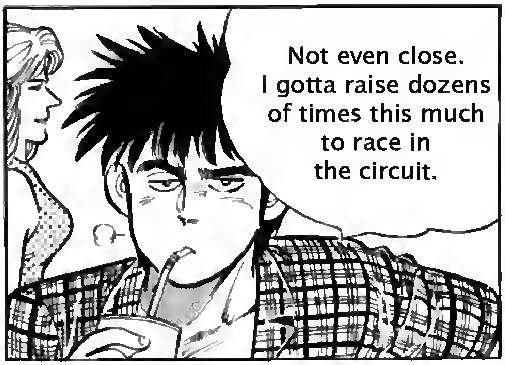

Huh!?
Who knows if the sun will rise tomorrow...
Whoa!
ZOOM

BRAAAH
I'VE never seen a Volvo fly like that in my life.


You're a pretty damn good driver!
Ha ha ha! That'll be 200 pounds, my friend.

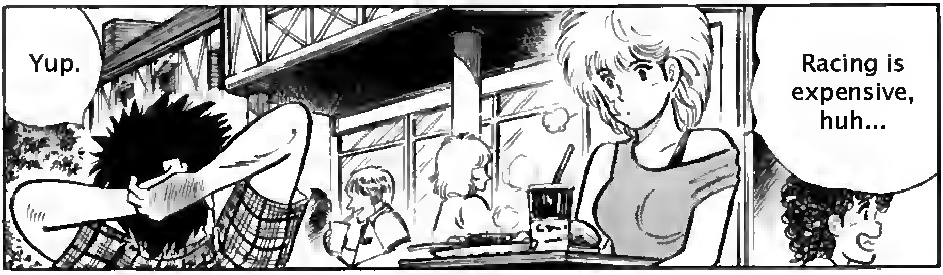

You got a turbo engine in that thing or what!?
I'll challenge you again any time you're up for it.

Wait a minute...!
It's that Volvo.


Not even close. I gotta raise dozens of times this much to race in the circuit.

You were incredible, Gunma. And undefeated so far!
It's like we got rich overnight.

Yes!
But you can eat whatever you want now, Peabow, and lots of it!


Yup.
Racing is expensive, huh...

Gunma, looks like we've got another challenger.

"You're a tortoise"... heh.

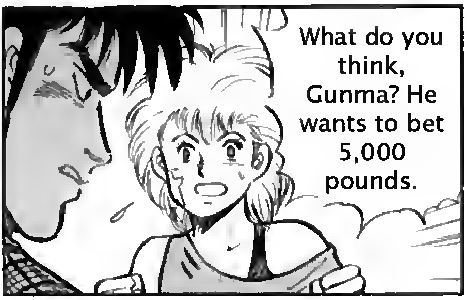
TAP
TAP

Let me finish my lunch, Sako.
How about it, sir? 200 pounds says you're a tortoise too slow to beat us!
200 pounds, ay?
!?
Can't quite put my finger on it...
That beard... Where have I seen this guy before...?
But I say we up the bet to 5,000 pounds. My opponent there won in Macau after all!
We've got another one, Gunma!
Okay then! It's a bet!

MACAU GRAND PRIX 澳門格蘭揚
You're that bastard who hit me at the victory podium!
SHOOK
Now I remember! It's you!

Heh heh... Sorry about that little incident. But still, it's odd meeting you here.

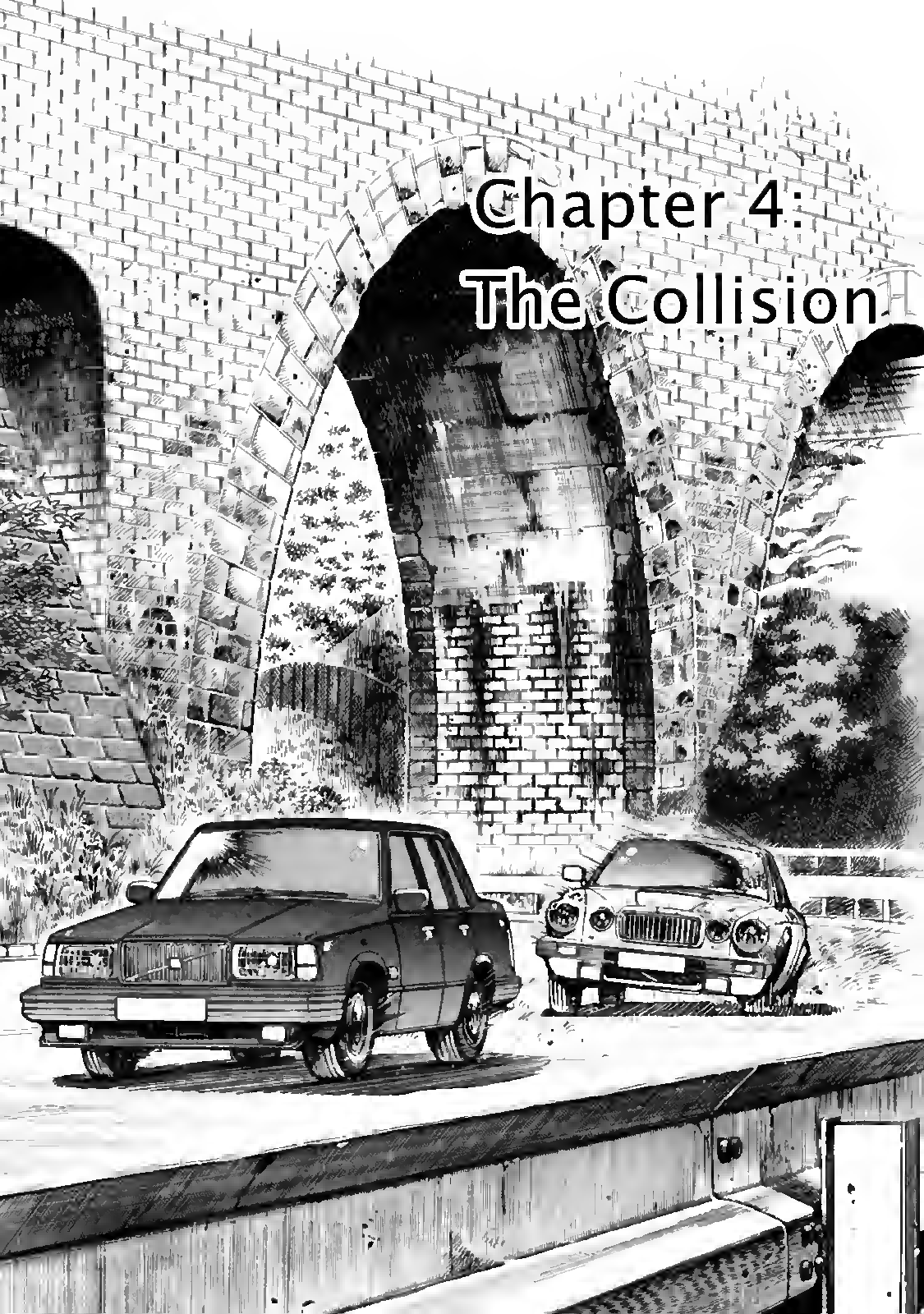
...


What do you think, Gunma? He wants to bet 5,000 pounds.

But I do this alone. You guys ain't riding this time.
You got it Sako. I'm in.

Gunma...

F
VOL.13


Chapter 4:
The Collision

I advise you and the boy not to ride. This is a race for 5,000 pounds after all, and it could get dangerous!
If you don't like it, then take a taxi home.
Nope. You wait here.
Don't leave us here, Gunma! We're riding too!
I happen to be on my way to a friend's house.
Now for the course.
Gun-ma...
Gu...
Fine with me.
He wants to race to his friend's house.
How about we race there? It's about 20 kilometers from here.

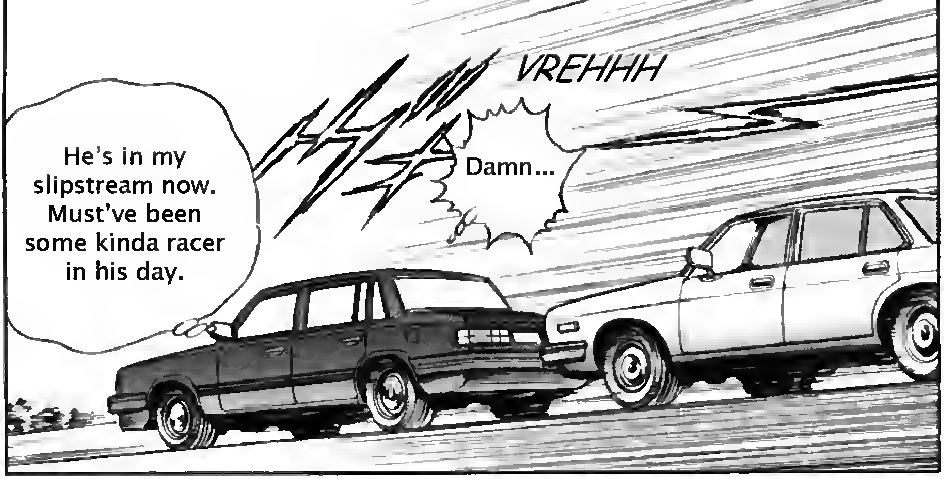
He says no shortcuts.
And no short-cuts.
YAK
YAK
Very well! I'll make you a map.
No need to worry about that. I'll be right on your tail the whole way. If you can't lose me before the goal, I win. Sound good?
Got it.
Gun-ma!
SLAM
SLAM

Sako, go home.
And round up the gang for a party tonight!
You don't even know these roads, so I think at least I should...
You can't expect to race while looking at a map!
Go on, get.
I need to squeeze in a little image training here.
But...
Now get.
We're about to be 5,000 pounds richer! Ha ha ha!
...
Image training?
GS
22

A6006
Normanton
on-Soar
...?
VROOM
!
Let's do this, old man!
...
VROOM

Is he gonna be okay, Sako?
SCREETCH
SCREETCH
I don't know.
SHOOOOM
VRRRRRRRR

VROOH
BRAAAH
SHUK
BREHHH

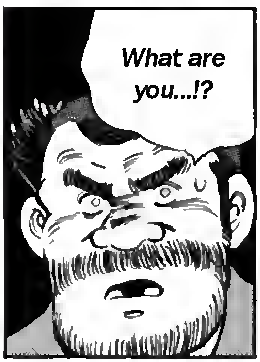

VREHHH
He's in my slipstream now. Must've been some kinda racer in his day.
Damn...

...and onto the regular roads!
Almost off the motorway now...

Lockington
Exit
A50
There's the exit!

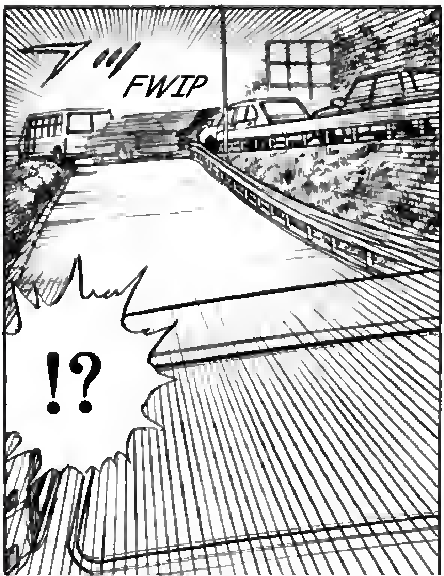
What the...
SHTUK
CLICK
Take this you old coot!

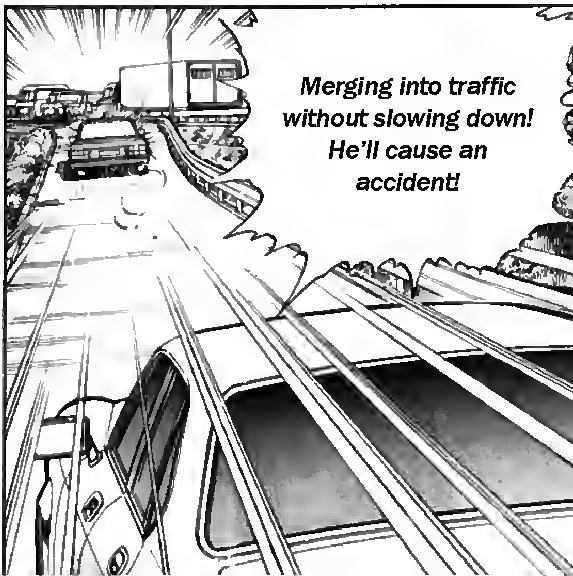
SCREECREECH
You imbecile!
SHUK
How can you brake like that? Do you have a bloody death wish!?
...
Peace
Surprised, old fella? Careful not to smack into me!


What are you...!?

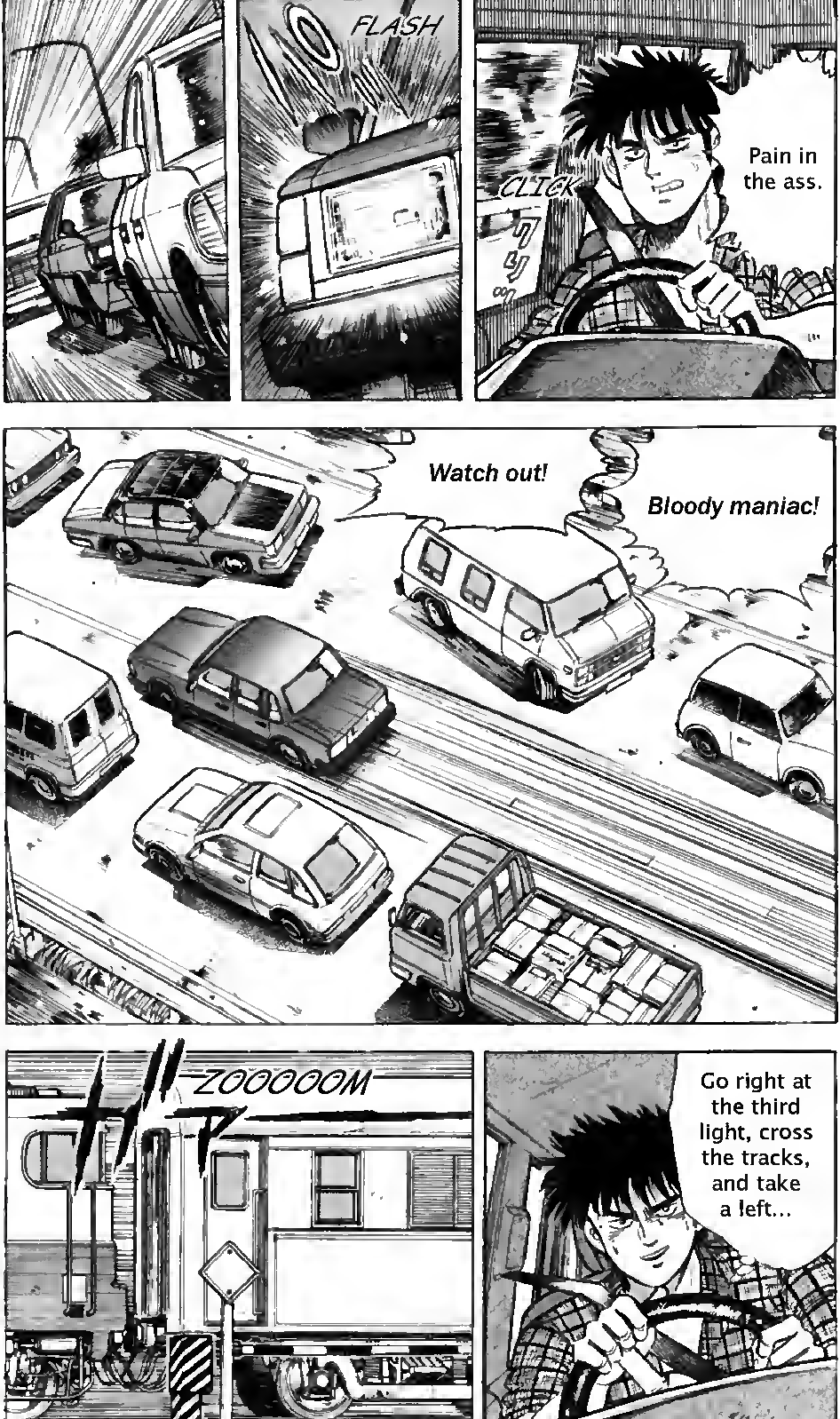
Now we see what you're made of. How fast can you go while looking at that map, hm?

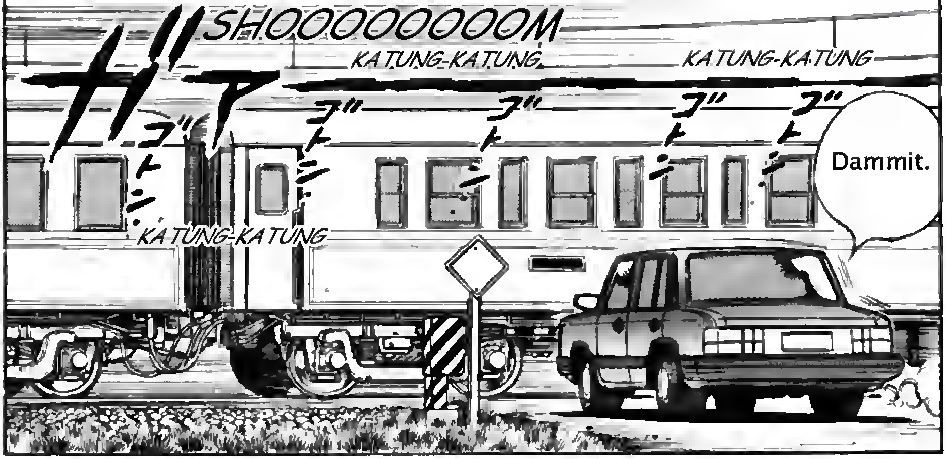
It's gettin' pretty congested here.


FWIP
!?


Merging into traffic without slowing down! He'll cause an accident!

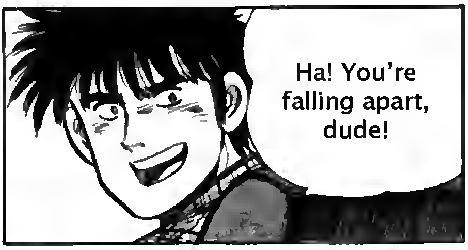
He's gone!
IRRRRK
SCREETCH
Whoa!
SCREETCH
SCREETCH

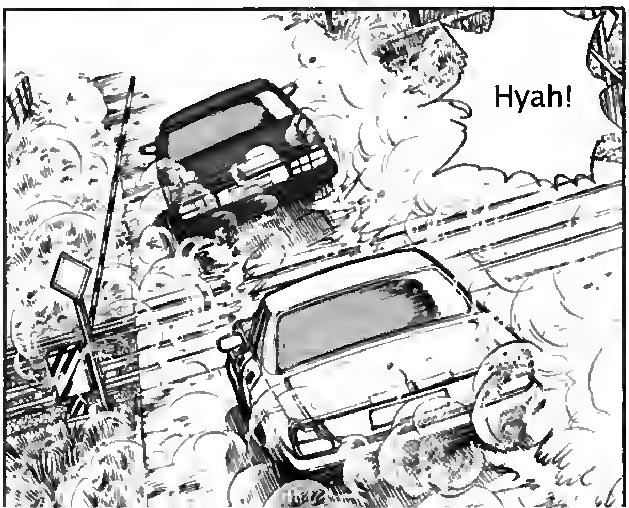

FLASH
CLICK
Pain in the ass.
Watch out!
Bloody maniac!
ZOOOOOM
Go right at the third light, cross the tracks, and take a left...


SHOOOOOOOOM
KATUNG-KATUNG
KATUNG-KATUNG
KATUNG-KATUNG
Dammit.

!

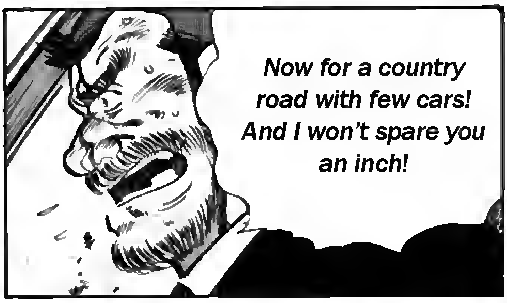
Huff
Huff
Huff
Huff

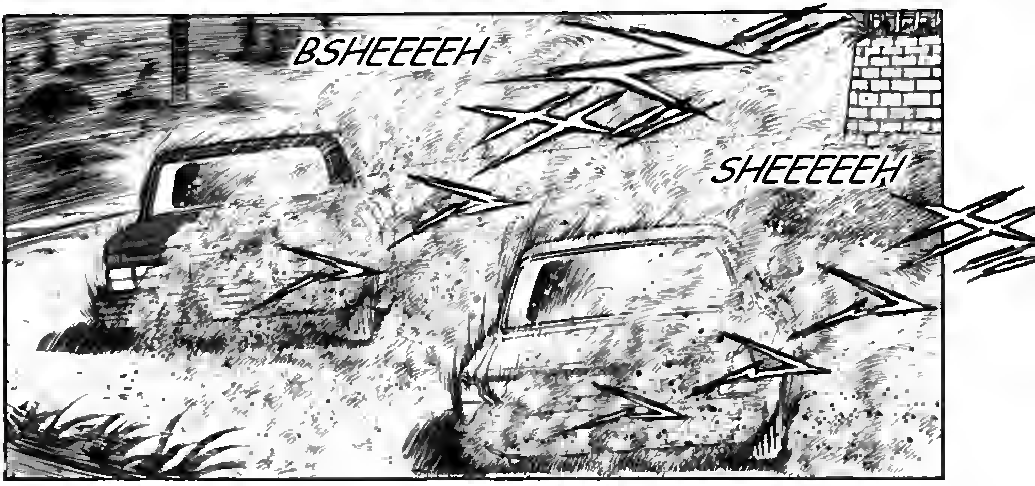

Ha! You're falling apart, dude!


Hyah!

BRAAAAAAAH

All this dust is gonna slow me down.

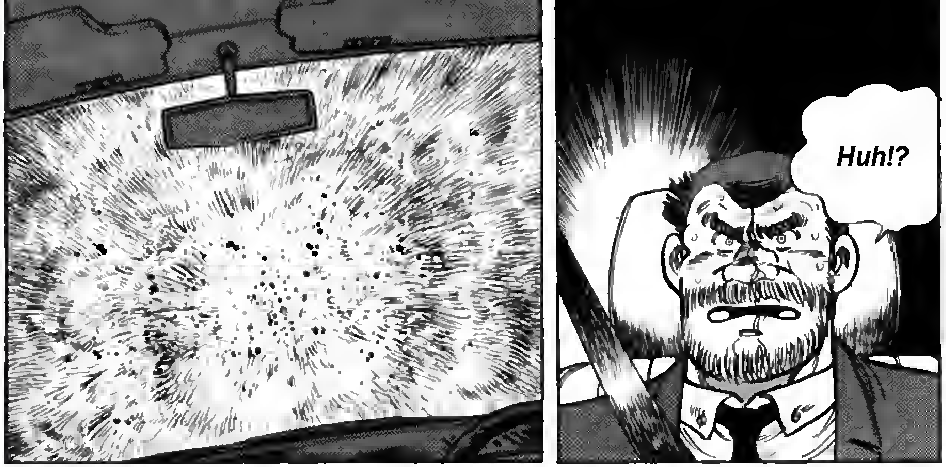

Now for a country road with few cars! And I won't spare you an inch!


BSHEEEEH
SHEEEEEH

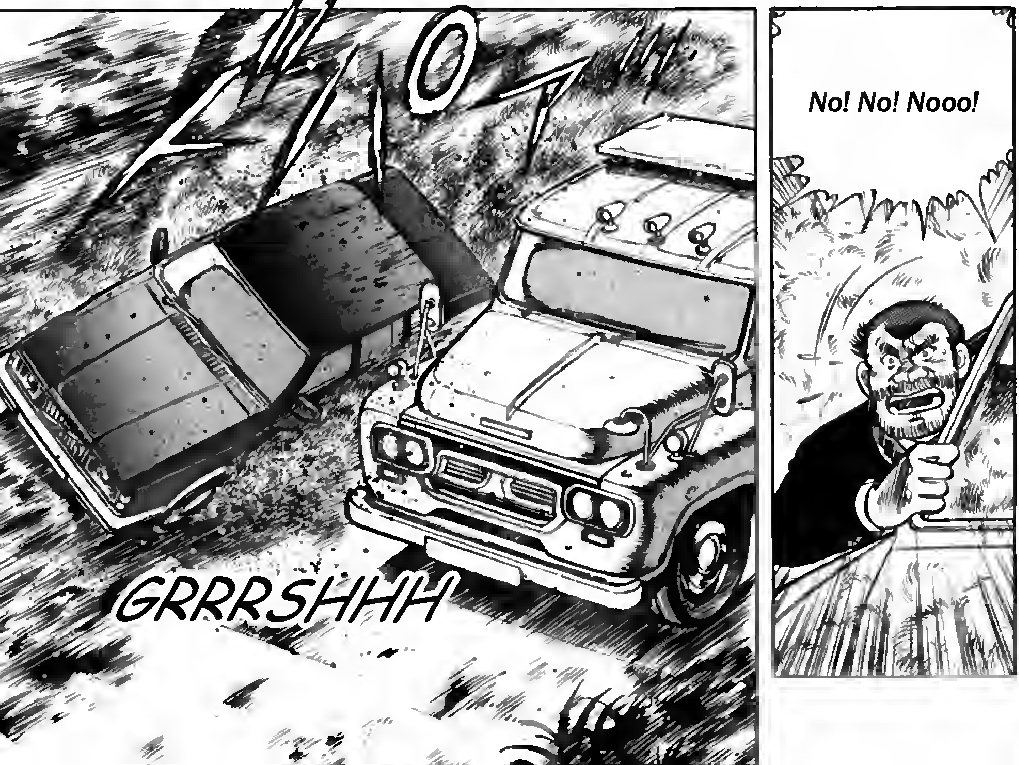
He's driving like a bloody local on these roads.
Gotta hand it to this kid. I can't imagine he's driving while looking at the map.

Crap... We're almost to the goal.
It's less than a kilo away...
BRAAAH
BRRRSHHHH
I oughta use this...

Heh heh! Show's over, mate. This road is too narrow. You'll never pass that truck.
WOOSH
That's right! Gimme more dust!
BAM
SWOOF
Gimme more dust dammit!
SWOOOF
TAP
Ha ha ha! Look at all that dust on him! This is bloody brilliant!

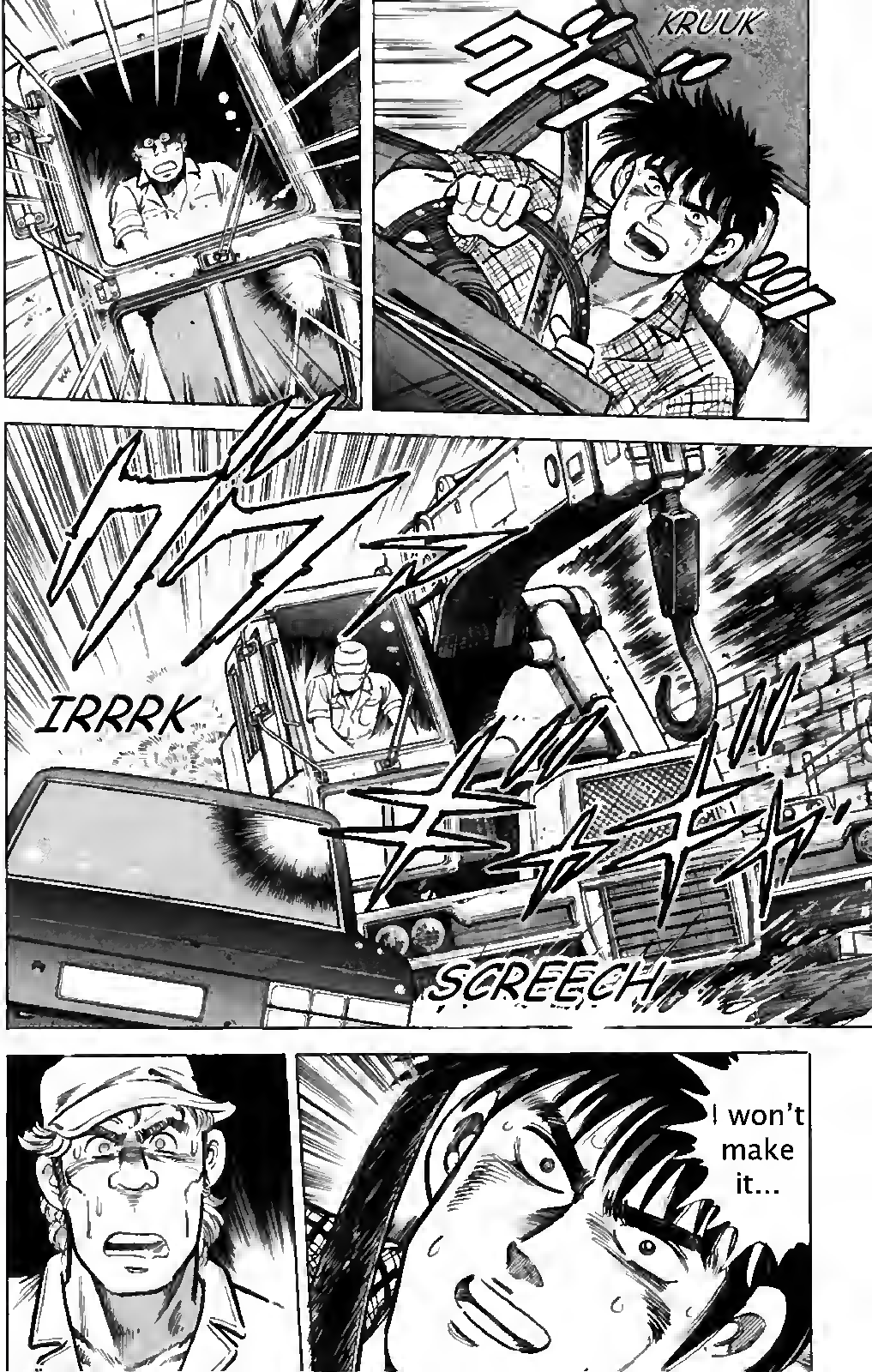

Huh!?

!?


KLIOK
GRRRSHHH
No! No! Nooo!

Ha ha ha ha! How's it feel, dumbass!?
Damn it all!
HOOONK
...!?
FWOOH
HONK
HONK
HOOONK

Chapter 5: Meeting of Fate

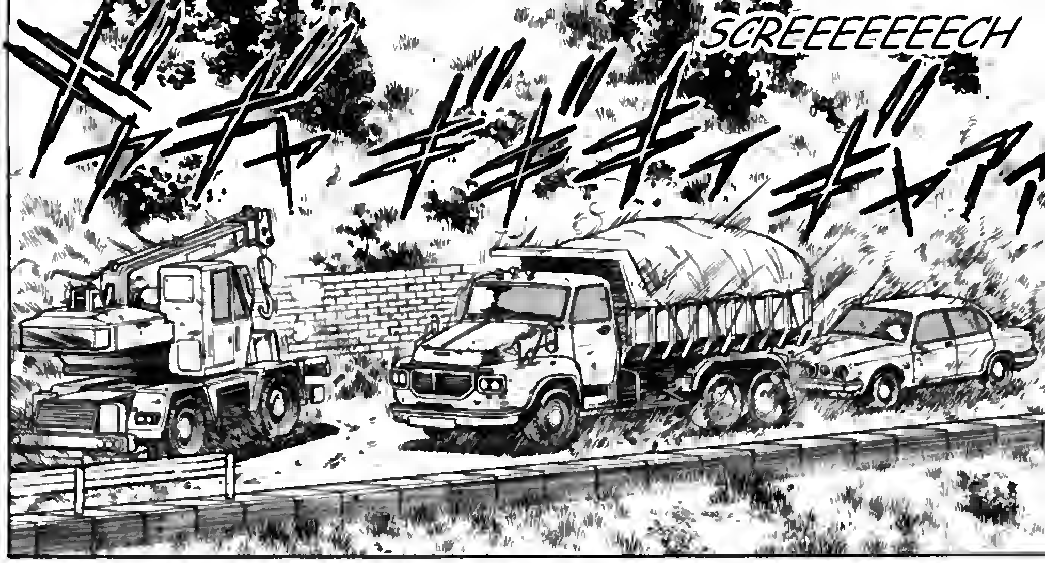

KRUUK
IRRRK
SCREECH
I won't make it...

SKRRRRRR
BAM
SLAM
SLAM!!

He's done for!
Holy...!

VREHHHH
KSHH
SPRISHHH
BUMP
BUMP
BADUNK
BADUNK

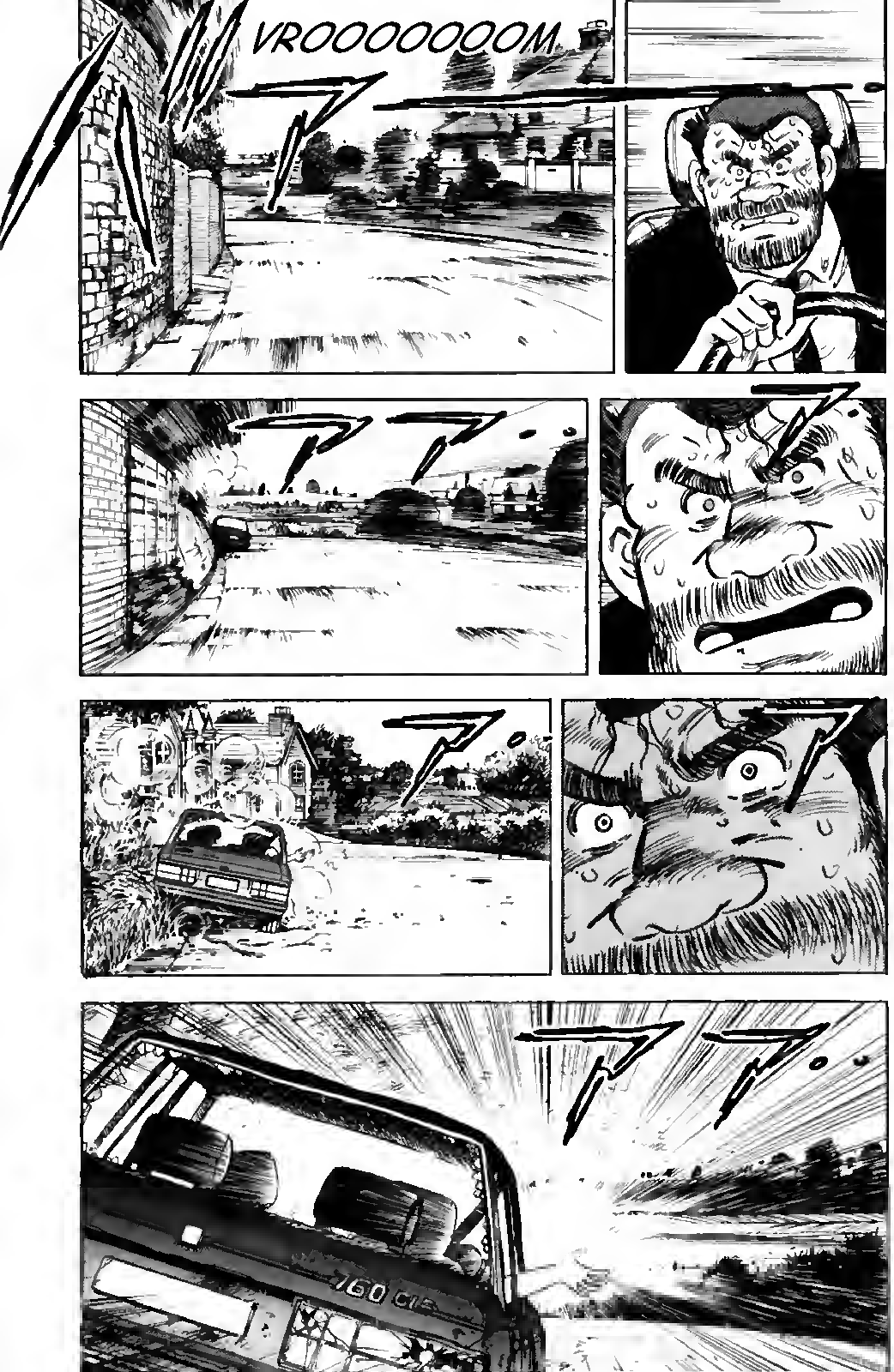
Junko...
スナップ
SNAP


SCREEEEEEECH

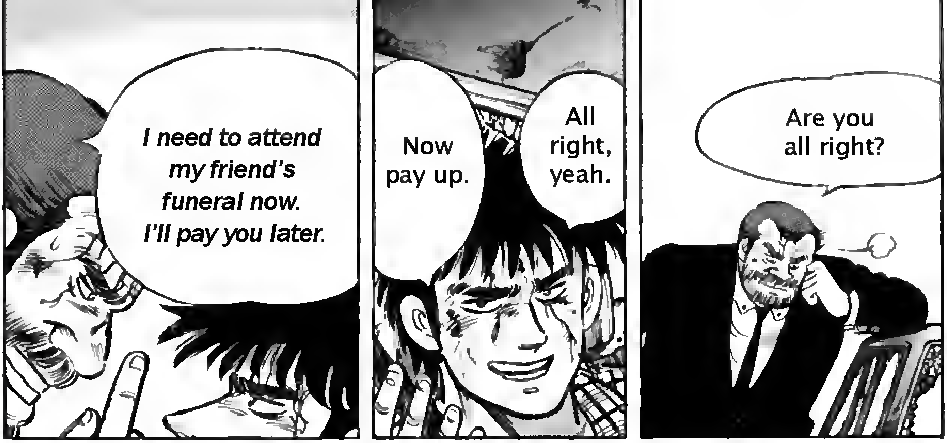
This is a one-way street, you wanker!

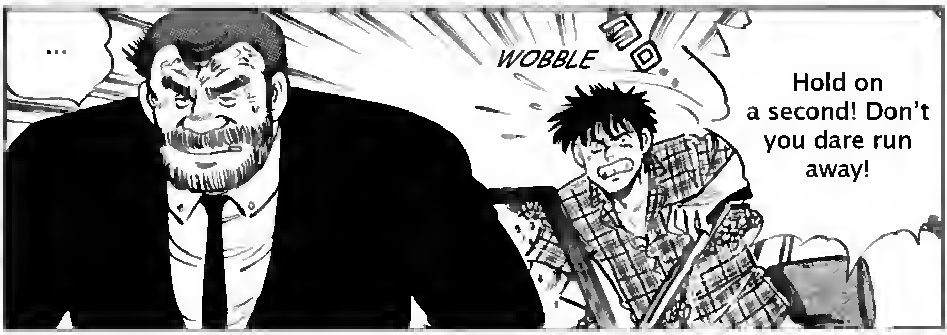
SLAM
That idiot.

SLAM
He fell onto the lower street.
It's that car's fault, driving at crazy speeds! Don't blame me!
RUSH
SKRRR
Move it!
ZOOM
VROOOH
Damn damn...
I prefer to think of it as a short-cut.
True, it's a one-way street, but there's hardly a car on it.


VROOOOOOOOM
160 CV

The money.
Pay up.
SCREET
SCREECH
YAK
YAK
...
Just like it says on the map.
KACHUK
I made it.
Do you know this man?
I was shocked half to death, Orman! A car just fell from the sky!
Orman! Dear God, what happened!?


I need to attend my friend's funeral now. I'll pay you later.
Now pay up.
All right, yeah.
Are you all right?

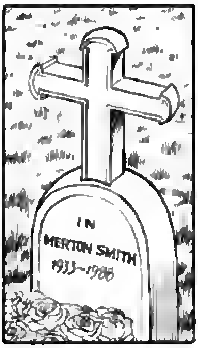

...
WOBBLE
Hold on a second! Don't you dare run away!

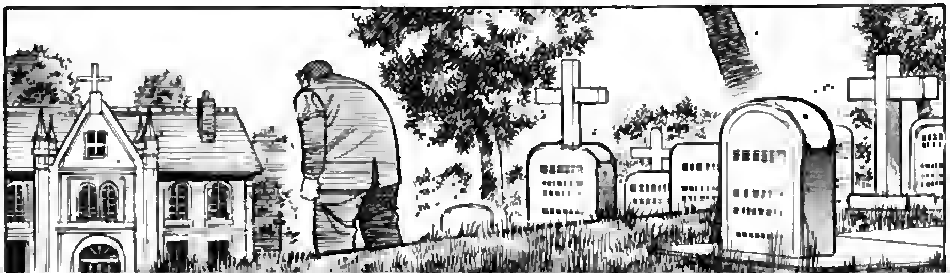
Is he a friend of yours?
Call an ambulance. I'm surprised he can still talk.

CRACK

Get back here with my 5,000 pounds.

What an animal...
THUMP
Orman!
Unbellevable.
Very well.
I apologize for the hassle at such a time, but could we get this man to a bed and tend to his wounds?
This was almost a two-man funeral.

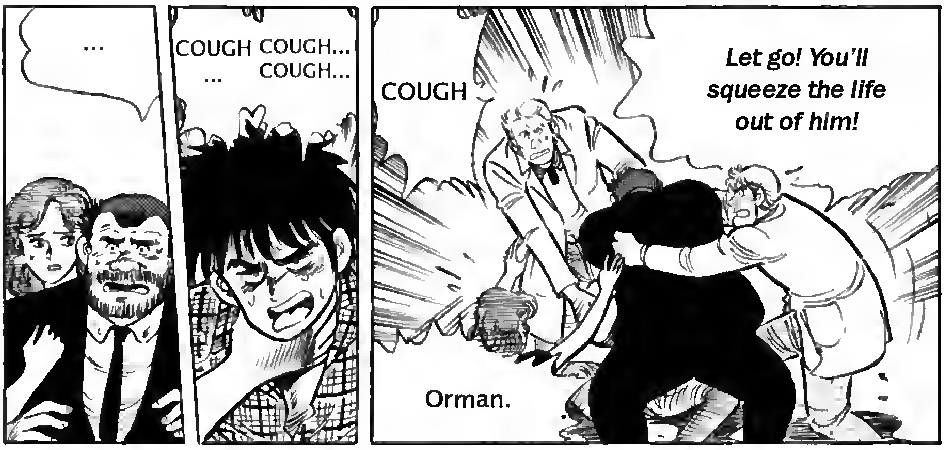

I N
MERTON SMITH

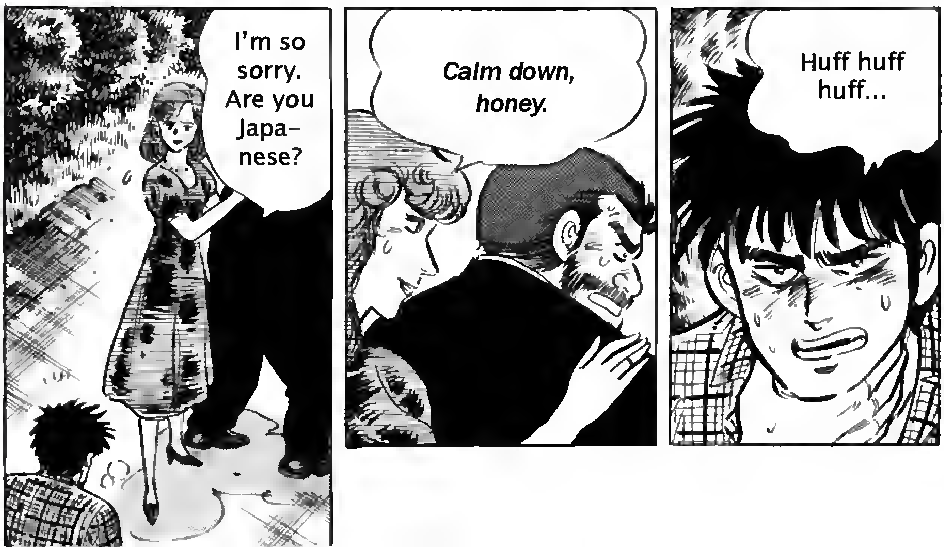


I ain't moving a muscle till I get my money!
...
...
Let go of me! I ain't going anywhere!
!?
Gimme my 5,000 pounds!
BAM!
Hush up with your Japanese! You're an injured man.
5,000 pounds.
There you are old man! I won the race, so cough up my 5,000 pounds!
The name's Gunma Akagi, right?
SCRIBBLE
SCRIBBLE
I'll write you a check.

Heh heh...
However ...
5,000 pounds. I'm a man of my word.
FLAP
SMACK
Don't you ever get behind the bloody wheel again!
W... what're you doing!?
Or else, I'll snap your bloody neck!
Promise me! Swear it right here and now!
Promise you'll never drive again!

SQUEEZE
I'm... gonna die...
Punks like you shouldn't be allowed to drive. Understand? You're bound to cause great pain to those around you!

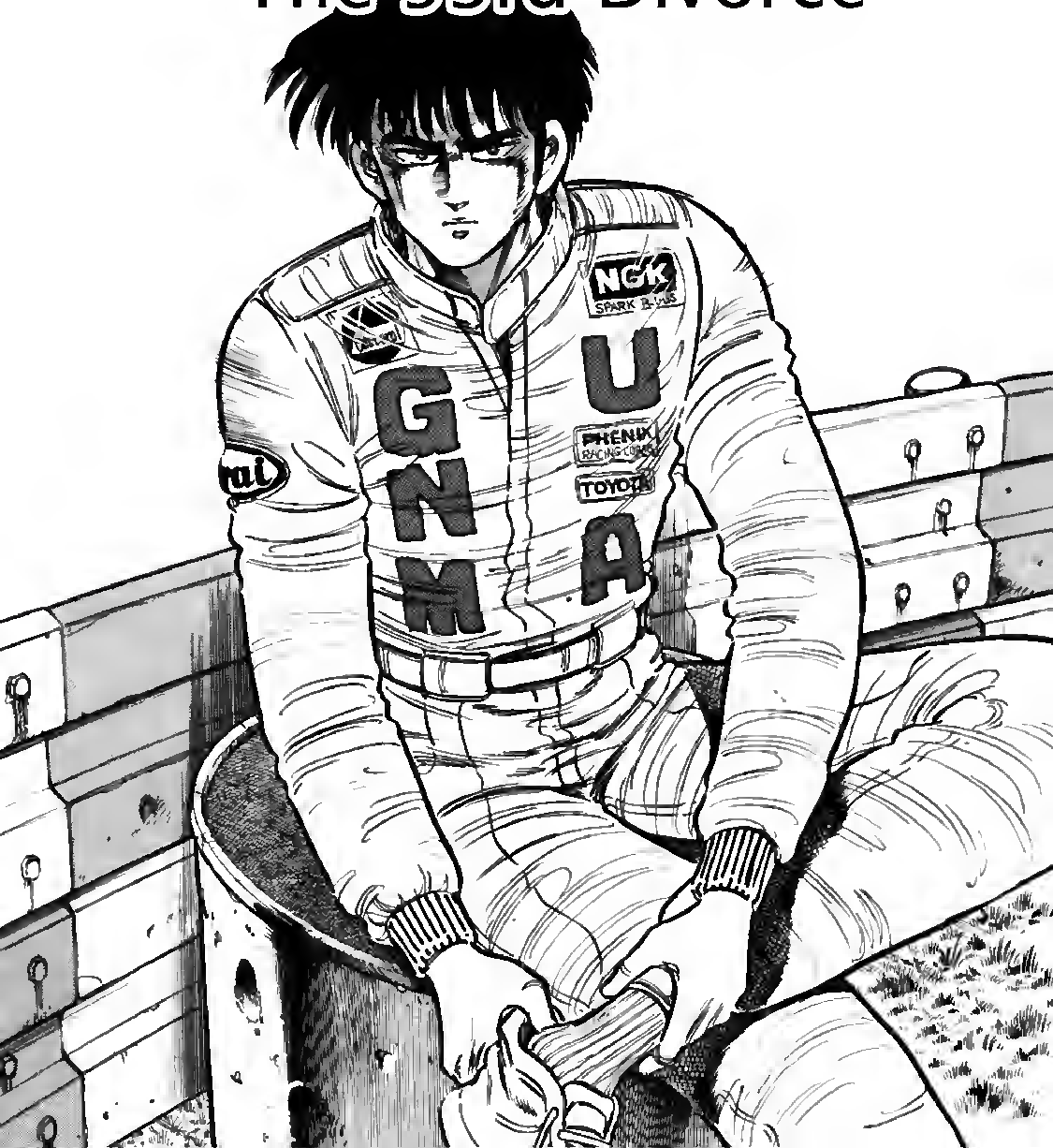

...
COUGH COUGH... ... COUGH...
COUGH
Let go! You'll squeeze the life out of him!
Orman.


I'm so sorry. Are you Japa-nese?
Calm down, honey.
Huff huff huff...

I hope you'll forgive him.
Today we're having a funeral for his very close friend, which is why he's so emotional now.
Stop crying, old man. It's embarrassing.
Some things in life ain't so bad, so try to suck it up, huh?
SNIFF
SNIFF
Why did you have to die? Someone like you... Why? Wuhuhh...
!?
...you bumped into me today, a genius behind the wheel. Consider it some kinda fate.
Even though you lost your good racing friend...
For example, some good things...
Okay?

F
VOL.13

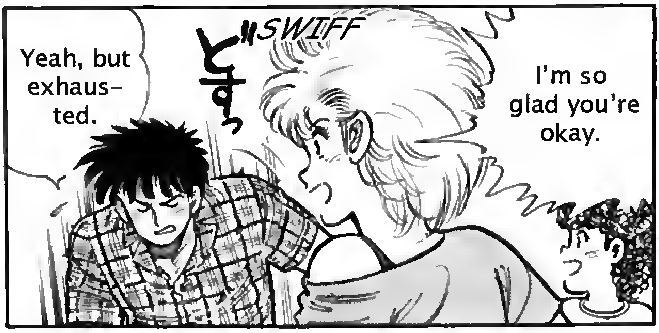
Chapter 6:
The 53rd Divorce



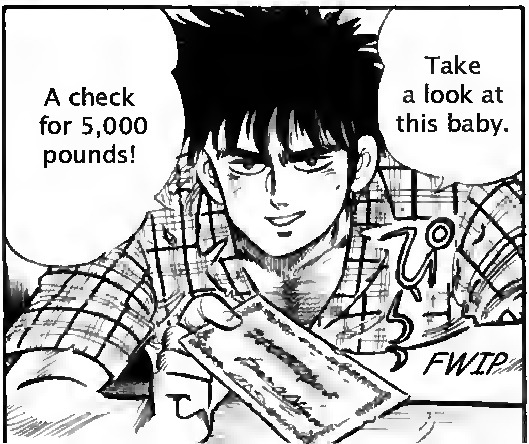
Gun-
ma...
Gunma
...
What's
the matter
with you
two?

I'm back,
Sako.

So how did
it go with
the Jaguar?


Yeah, but
exhaus-
ted.
SWIFF
I'm so
glad you're
okay.

Woohoo!


A check
for 5,000
pounds!
Take
a look at
this baby.
FWIP

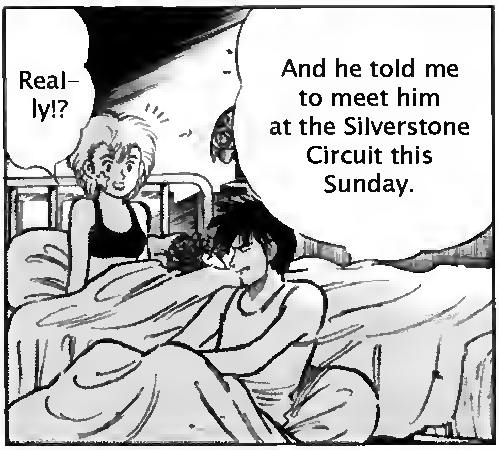
Ooh...
Oh My God!
Except...
...I tore up Tyson's Volvo pretty bad.
Don't worry, Tyson. We'll pay what it costs to fix it. Right, Gunma?
How the devil did it get smashed up like that!?
What the hell happened to this Volvo, Sako!? I borrowed it from a good friend and lent it to you!
WEST
You must be a terrible driver!

Hold on. Why would you be paying for it!?
How much will it cost to fix, Tyson?
How much?
Stop it, Tyson! Are you planning to get violent again?
I'm not liking this! Not liking it one bit!
I lent it to Sako, so why would you pay for anything!?
Are you two already in bed together? Is that it!?
I respect blokes who can drive and boink chicks like a boss.
Gunma and I are mates, right?
If that's how it is, then get out!
Of course not, Sako! Nobody's getting violent today.

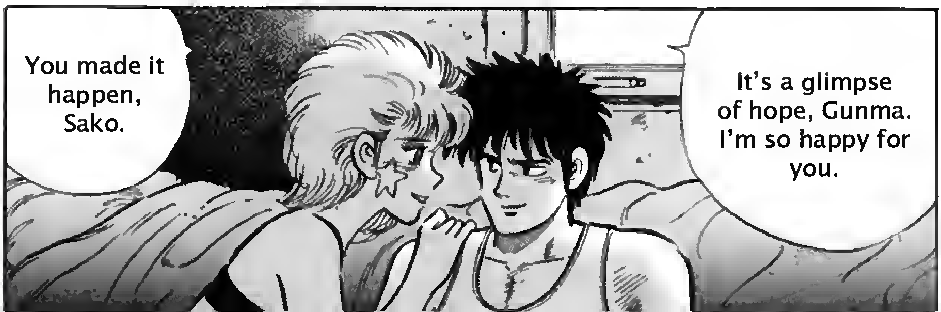
But how is he in bed?
Sako, I'll admit Gunma's one hell of a driver.
Thanks for letting me borrow the car, Tyson. Is this enough for the damages?
Don't be silly.
Something tells me this Gunma bloke won't make you happy.
Let me get this off my chest, Sako.
...
But George was...
No, I didn't chase him off. He left on his own, and Gunma will do the same one of these days.
Just like George before him, someday he'll abandon you.
WEST

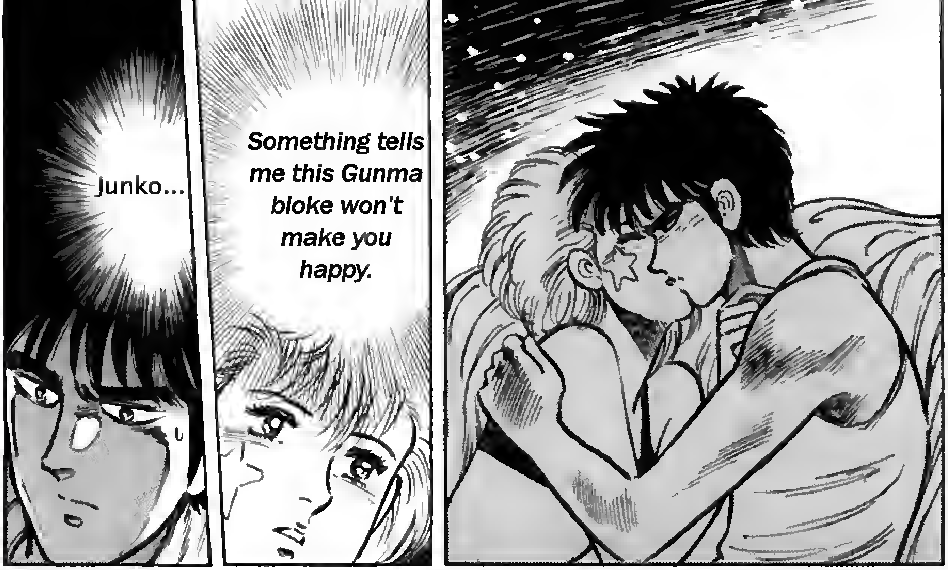
SNORE
SNORE
Apparently he's got his own racing team.
The old dude in the Jaguar's named Orman.

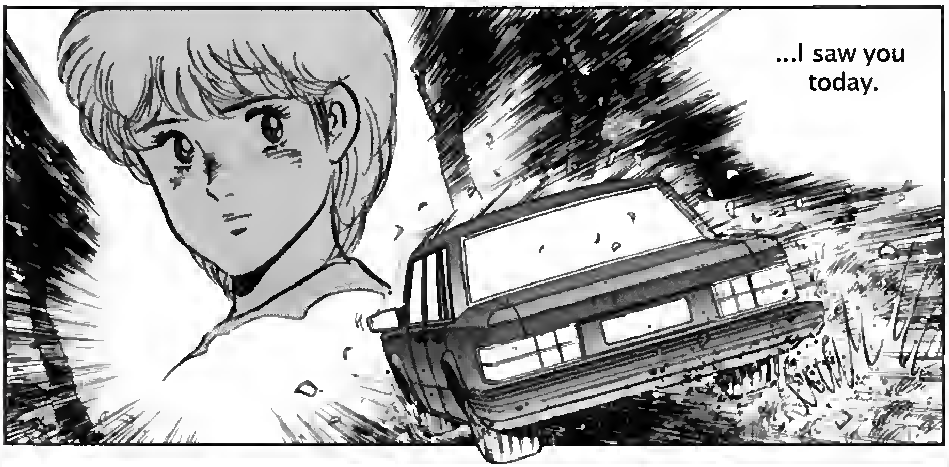
Ain't it? If everything goes well I could be racing again.
That's amazing!


Real-ly!?
And he told me to meet him at the Silverstone Circuit this Sunday.

Then I'll work my way up from there.
I can't let a chance like this pass me by, no matter what category it's in. Just gotta race my ass off.


You made it happen, Sako.
It's a glimpse of hope, Gunma. I'm so happy for you.

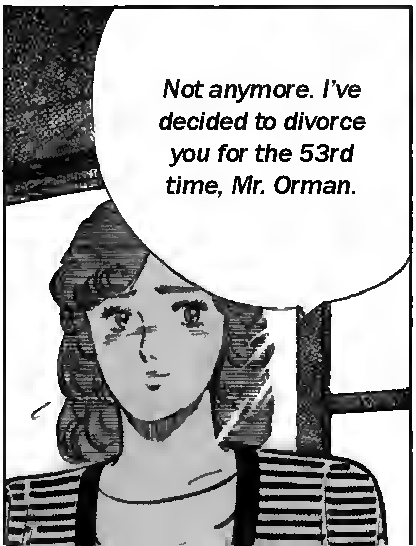

Junko...
Something tells me this Gunma bloke won't make you happy.


...I saw you today.

Sorry...
Come on! You still can't do it? I'm tired of kissing...

Excessive drinking is terrible for your health, Mr. Orman.

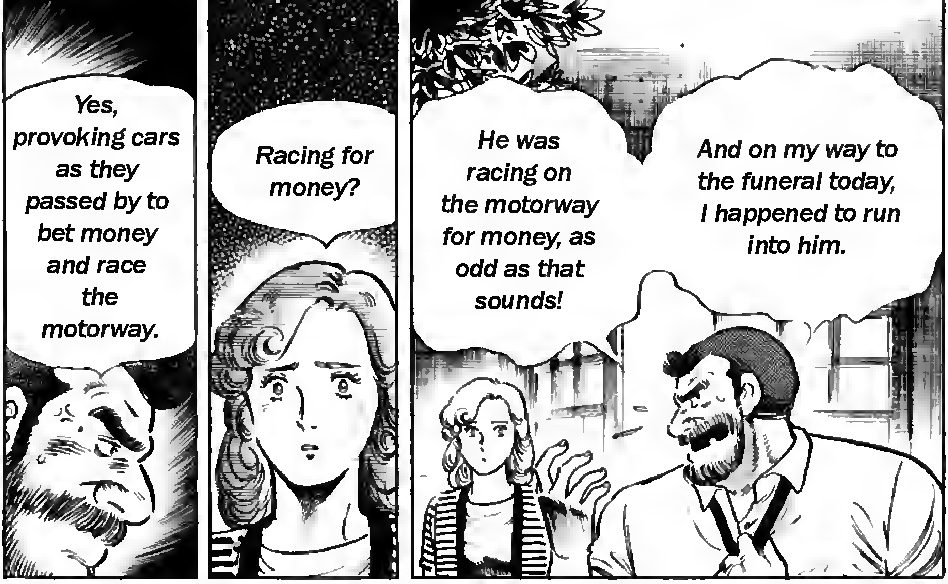
Not this again.

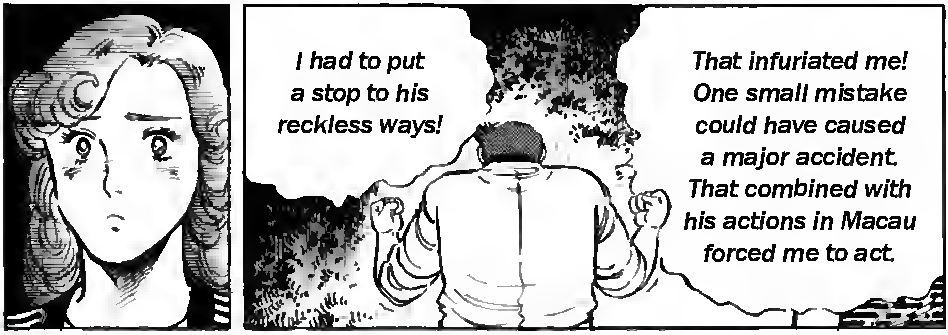

Not anymore. I've decided to divorce you for the 53rd time, Mr. Orman.

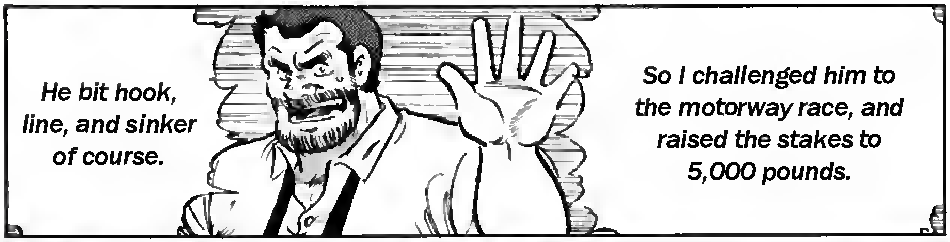
Would you call me Greg? We're married after all.

I realize that. His death was a shock to us all, but that's not the reason.
He didn't die in the circuit, you know.
So what's your reasoning behind our 53rd divorce? Because I'm responsible for the death of my pupil, Smith?
No one wants to see their loved one in a casket.
I'd already decided when you were an F1 racer, that I could never be the wife of someone who doesn't value his own life. Don't you see?
I'll be sleeping in another room from now on.
What a stunt at your age.
I've got it then. It's because of my ill-advised race with that Japanese kid on the day of Smith's funeral, banging up the Jaguar in the process.
Wait, Anna. I have an excuse for all this!
But throughout those 30 years, we've been married and divorced countless times.
I understand how you feel. We've been together for 30 years after all!

So I retired from the circuit and started my racing school, which helped me understand even more.
The fact that we went through that cycle is why I understand how you feel.
To lose a loved one is devastating.
When I was in the circuit, you'd divorce me every time I'd drive in a dangerous race.
So I promised you that I'd drive safely, and the marriage-divorce cycle continued.
I had an ulterior motive for that, Anna!
Then why did you race that Japanese boy?
Especially days like this when my pupils pass away.
He angered me so much in Macau, that I gave him a good wallop to the jaw!
I've known that kid since he raced F3 in Macau! He's a reckless driver with no sense of danger!

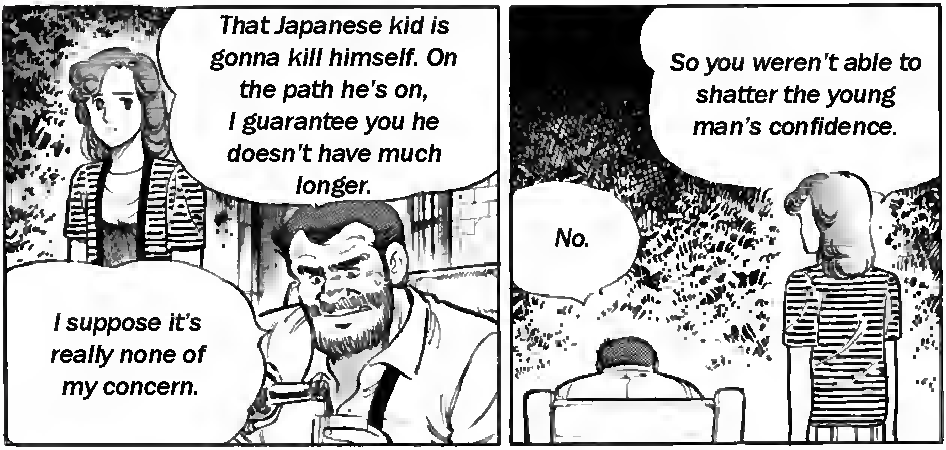

Yes, provoking cars as they passed by to bet money and race the motorway.
Racing for money?
He was racing on the motorway for money, as odd as that sounds!
And on my way to the funeral today, I happened to run into him.


I had to put a stop to his reckless ways!
That infuriated me! One small mistake could have caused a major accident. That combined with his actions in Macau forced me to act.


He bit hook, line, and sinker of course.
So I challenged him to the motorway race, and raised the stakes to 5,000 pounds.

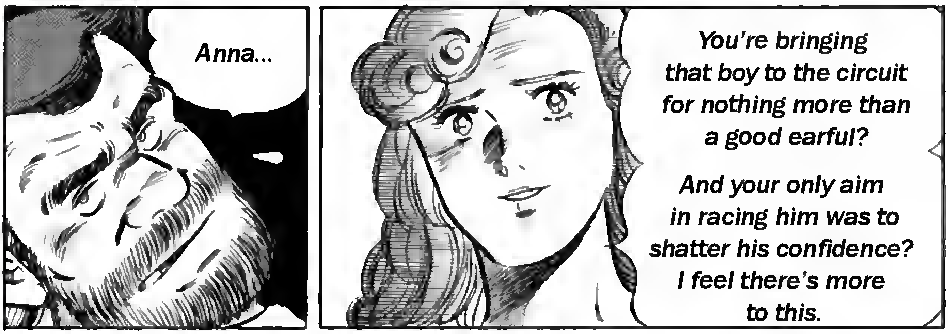
I meant to pick him to pieces, shatter his confidence so that he'd never race again!

But...
ドズ...
THUNK
He won.
That's what I meant to do...

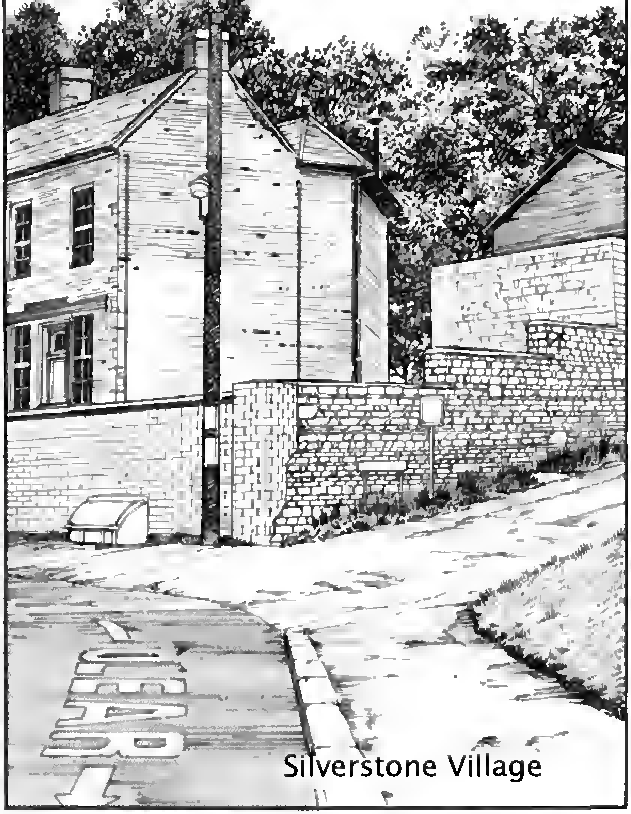

That Japanese kid is gonna kill himself. On the path he's on, I guarantee you he doesn't have much longer.
I suppose it's really none of my concern.
So you weren't able to shatter the young man's confidence.
No.

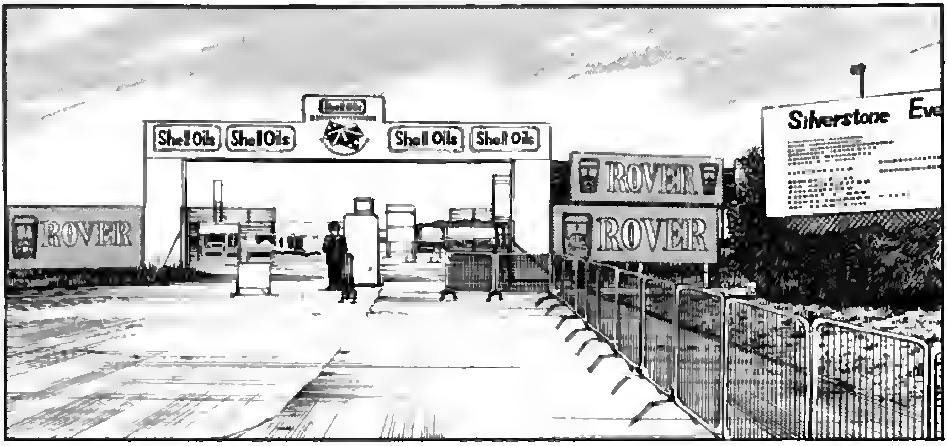
Is that why you invited him to Silverstone this Sunday?
More or less.
But we just lost Smith...
...so I can't turn a blind eye.

And that's all?
What!?
Give him a good earful.
What will you do then?

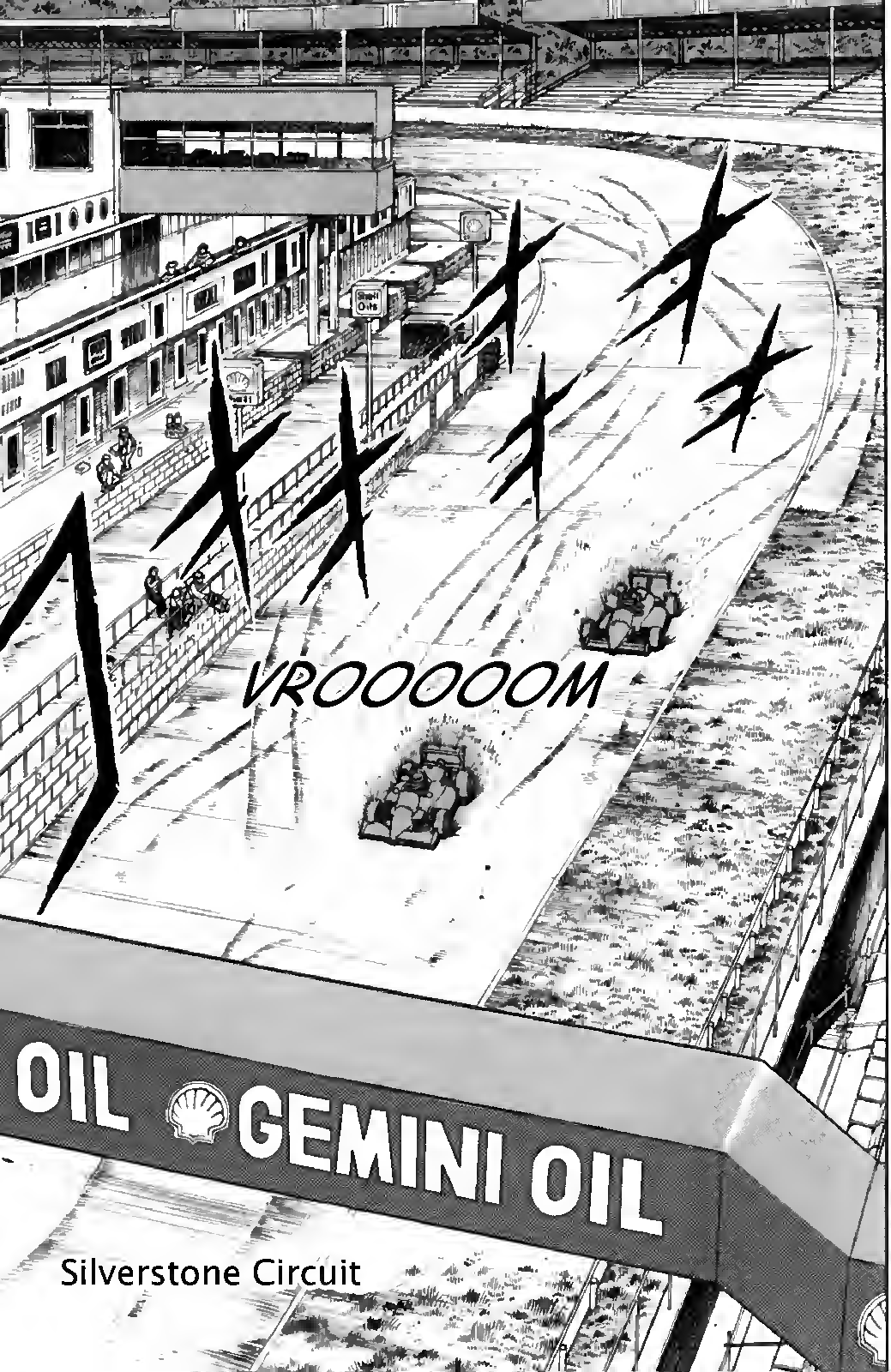

Anna...
You're bringing that boy to the circuit for nothing more than a good earful?
And your only aim in racing him was to shatter his confidence? I feel there's more to this.

How are we sleeping?
Separately of course Mr. Orman


Silverstone Village


Shell Oils
Shell Oils
Shell Oils
Shell Oils
ROVER
ROVER
ROVER
Silverstone

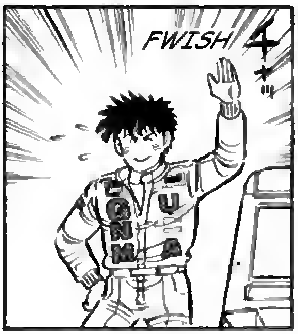
olivetti olivetti olivetti
olivetti olivetti olivetti

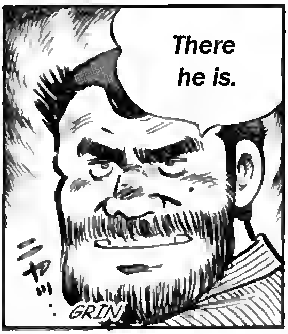


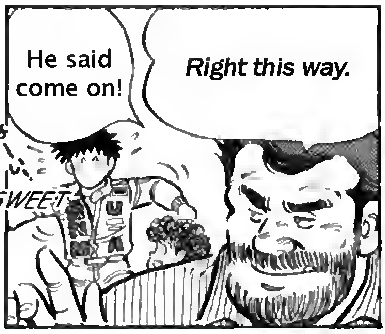
Silverstone Circuit

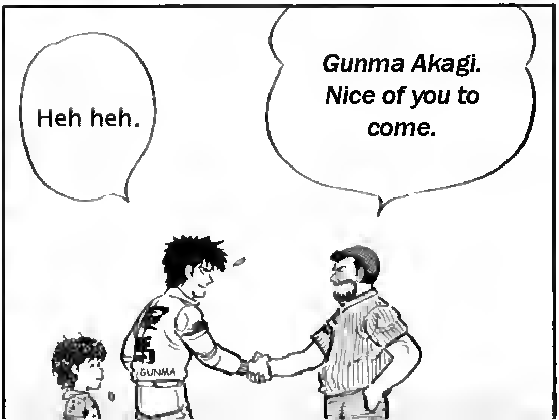
He should be in the paddock.
We're looking for a man named Orman.
PUT PUT
Heh heh... I guess it is.
PUT
You'll be able to race soon, Gunma. Isn't that awesome!?
Thank you.
PUT
PUT
You look cool!
Never thought I'd be wearing one again.
Haven't worn a racing suit in a while.
Whew.
VROOOM
PUT

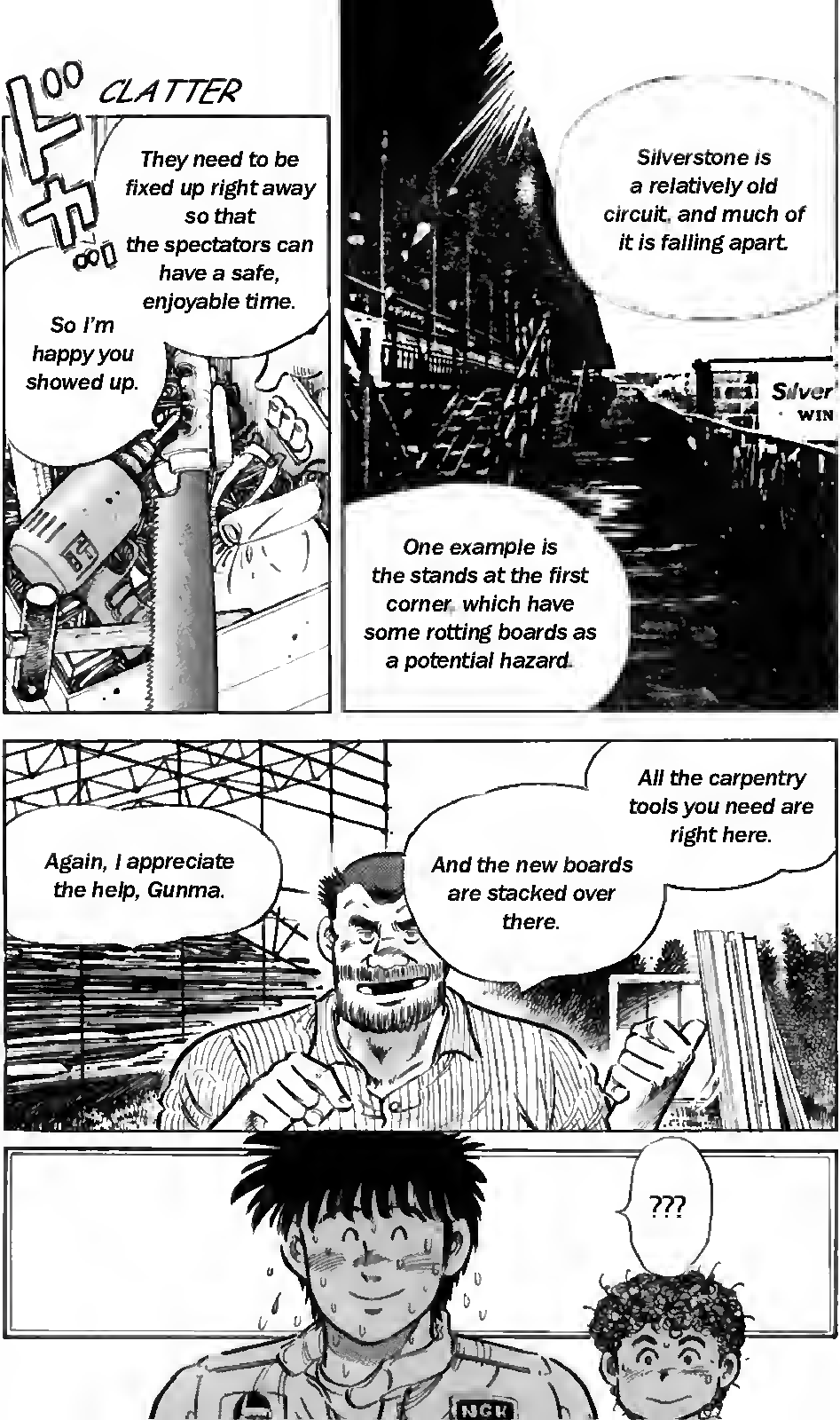
VROOOOOOOOOH
Castrol GTX
15
15
軍馬


FWISH
GUNMA

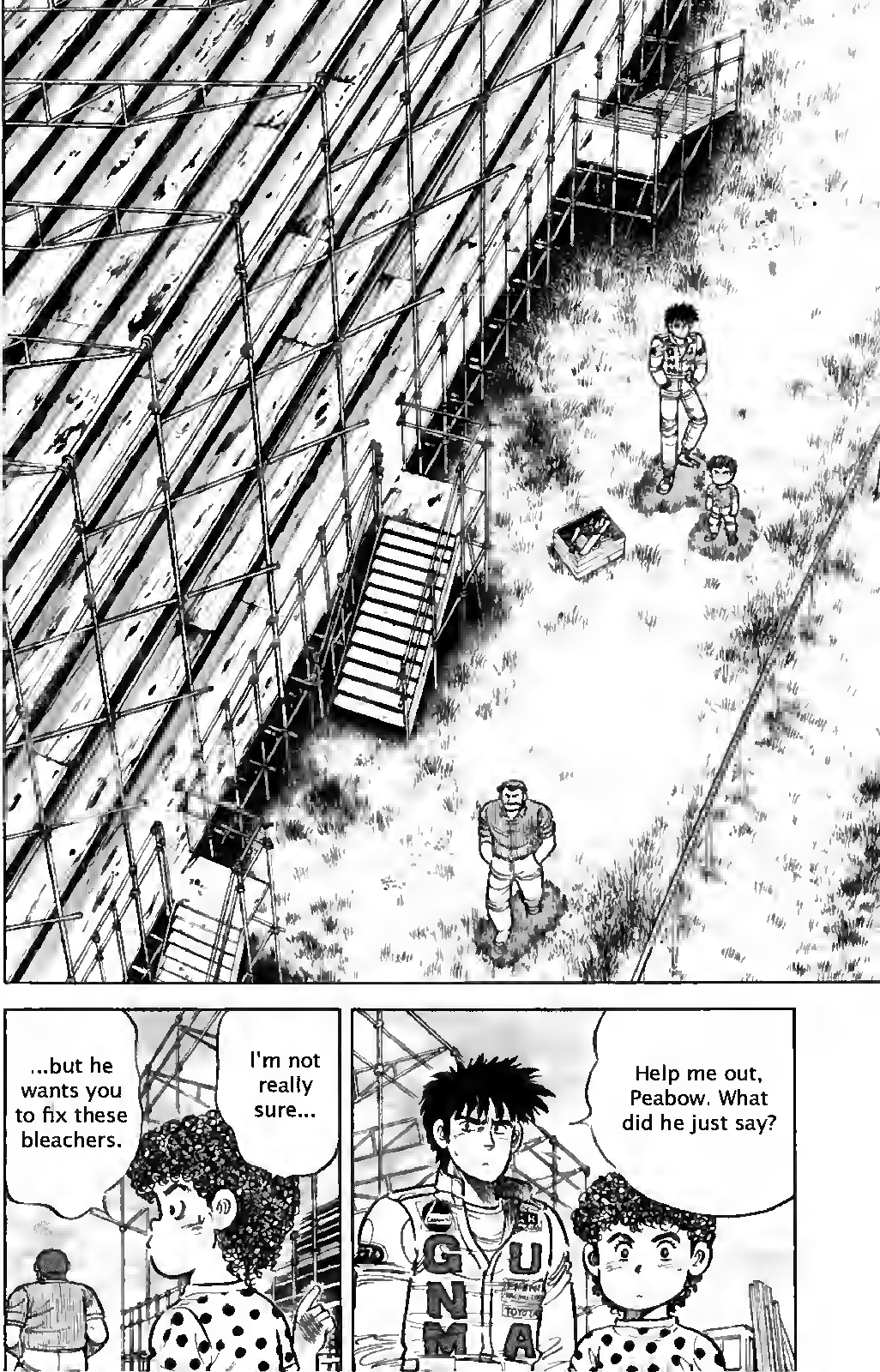

There he is.
ニヤ!!
GRIN


He said come on!
Right this way.
ﾆﾔﾘ
SWEET
GUNMA


Heh heh.
Gunma Akagi. Nice of you to come.
GUNMA


CLATTER
They need to be fixed up right away so that the spectators can have a safe, enjoyable time.
So I'm happy you showed up.
Silverstone is a relatively old circuit, and much of it is falling apart.
One example is the stands at the first corner, which have some rotting boards as a potential hazard.
Again, I appreciate the help, Gunma.
And the new boards are stacked over there.
All the carpentry tools you need are right here.
???

Chapter 7:
Foot in the Door


...but he wants you to fix these bleachers.
I'm not really sure...
Help me out, Peabow. What did he just say?
GUNMA

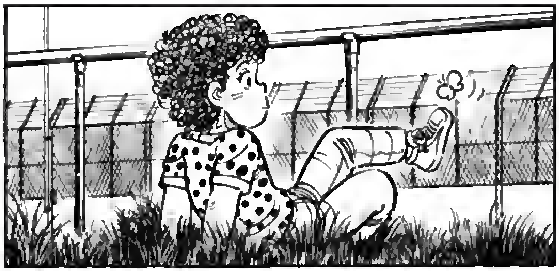
Tools?
Car-pentry ...
Lum-ber?
And use that lumber.
I'm not really sure myself, but he said to use these carpentry tools.
I don't get it. What's the angle here?
Fix bleachers!?
Help me out.
NGK
I'll be damned.
I think so.
...to fix some freaking bleachers?
...this guy invited me to the Silverstone Circuit...
So basi-cally...
NGK
NGK
どどどど
DASH DASH DASH
どどど...
どど...
DASH DASH DASH
どどどど
DASH DASH DASH

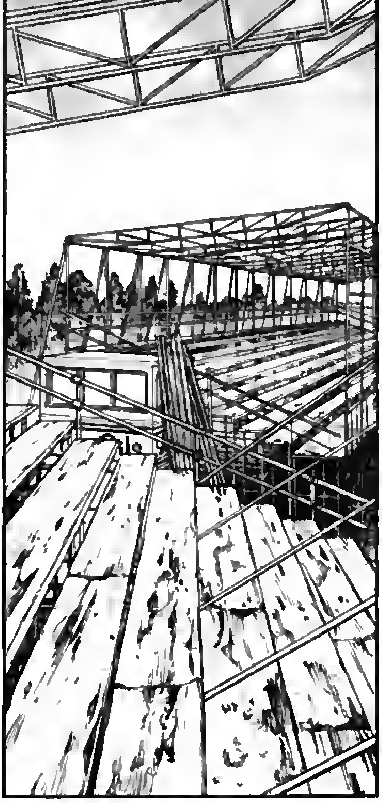
どどどどど
DASH·DASH·DASH
!!
Orman you son of a bitch! Stop screwin' with my head!
Gunma...
I'll freakin' kill you!
Stop it you idiot!
スパコ!!
SWOOSH
You're so dead!

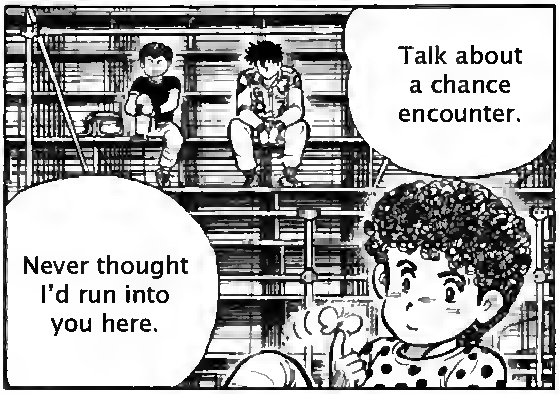
We gotta help him.
Get moving.
MURMUR
He's being chased around by some Asian bloke with a saw!
Look at that. Old Orman's in trouble!
MURMUR
PON
This sounds interesting. We'll do the photos later.
What's wrong?
Asian?
There's a mad Asian bloke on the loose.
Let go of me, kid!
Stop it, Gunma!
FWOOSH
What the hell has gotten into you!?

...I came all the way to this circuit in my racing suit to fix bleachers!
Ain't no damn way...
SPOOT
Or maybe tryin' to get his revenge for losing 5,000 pounds to me.
He's mocking me and enjoying every minute of it!
All I said...
Dirty, no-good...
He says ...
I never said a word about putting you behind the wheel!
DASH
DASH
Leave him alone!
Get back here!
Cool your jets!
...was that instead of risking your life, and hustling people for money on the motorway, you should come to the circuit for work!
BYANNNG

You won't get away with...
BUMP
ゴッ!!
Let go of me!
Piss off you idiots!
!?
PLAY OUT CHECKER
Goro...
...
Gunma...
Gu...



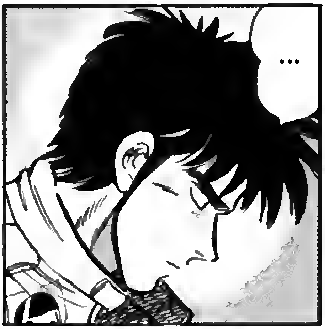



Talk about a chance encounter.
Never thought I'd run into you here.

Definitely not drea-ming.
Ouch...
Ha ha ha!
PINCH

I'm still in denial.
Couldn't believe my eyes.
Like I was dreaming.

Managed to get my foot in the door.
I'm working for a maga-zine now.
They got me taking photos for F3000.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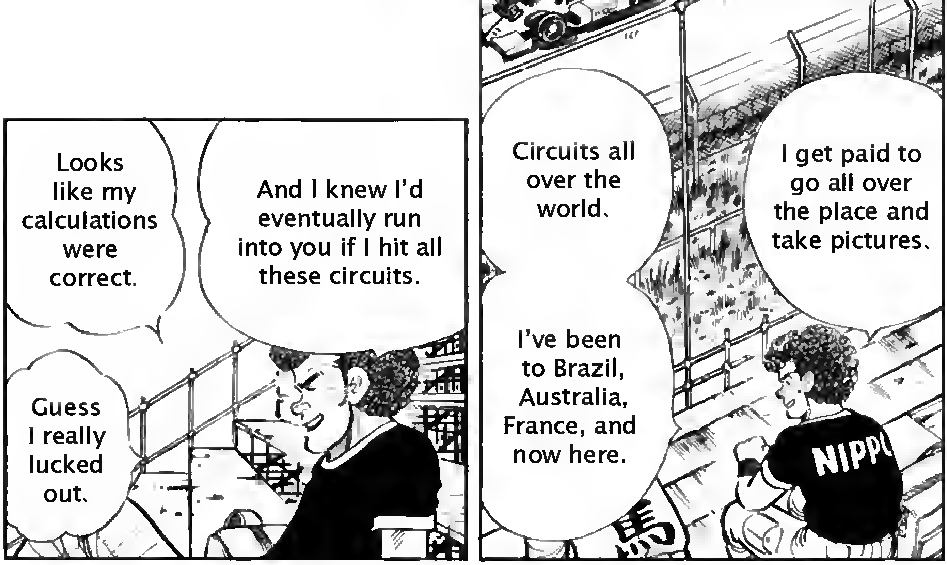
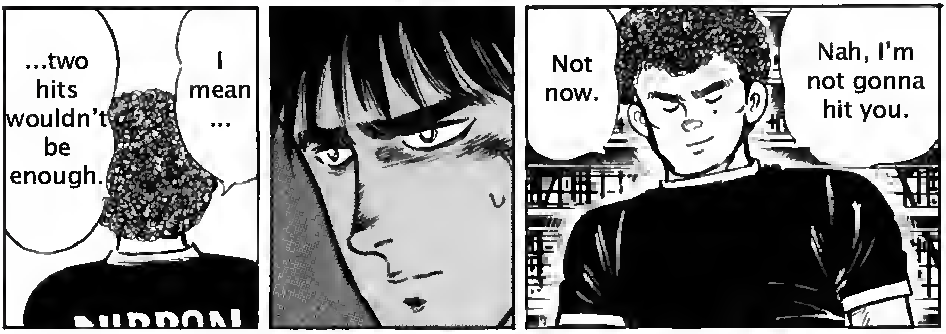

Looks like my calculations were correct.
And I knew I'd eventually run into you if I hit all these circuits.
Guess I really lucked out.
Circuits all over the world.
I get paid to go all over the place and take pictures.
I've been to Brazil, Australia, France, and now here.
NIPPON

So you've been looking for me, Goro?
I did have a hunch you left Japan.
Never thought it would be England though.

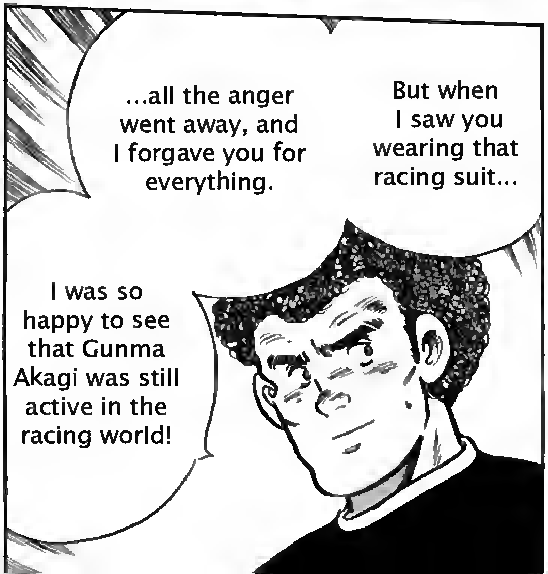
I see...
Oh yeah, and Kuroi asked me too...
And since you just up and left, I vowed to search the world for you so I could give you a good punch to the face!
Of course I have. You're my one and only photo subject after all!

...
Then have at it, Goro.
Okay ...
...
He wanted me to get in a good punch for him while I'm at it.


...two hits wouldn't be enough.
I mean ...
Not now.
Nah, I'm not gonna hit you.

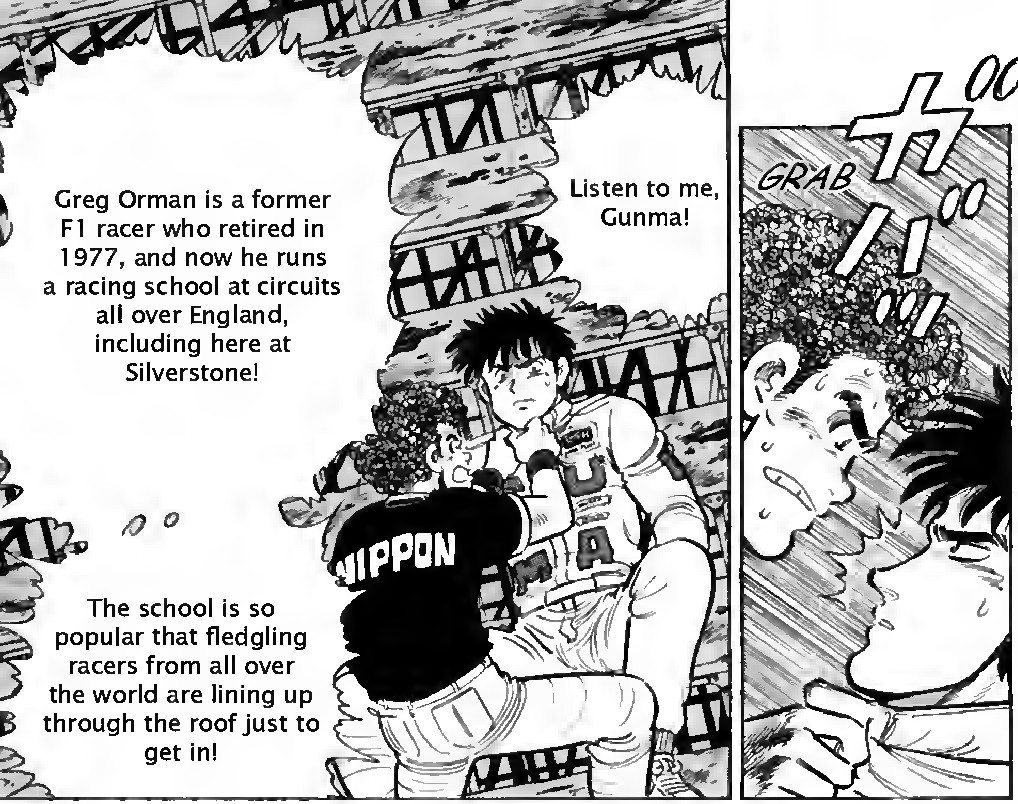
...Mr. Morioka, and all your fans, I wouldn't have enough strength in my fist to get in all the hits you deserve.
When taking into account Tamotsu, Junko, Yasu, the guys in your apartment...

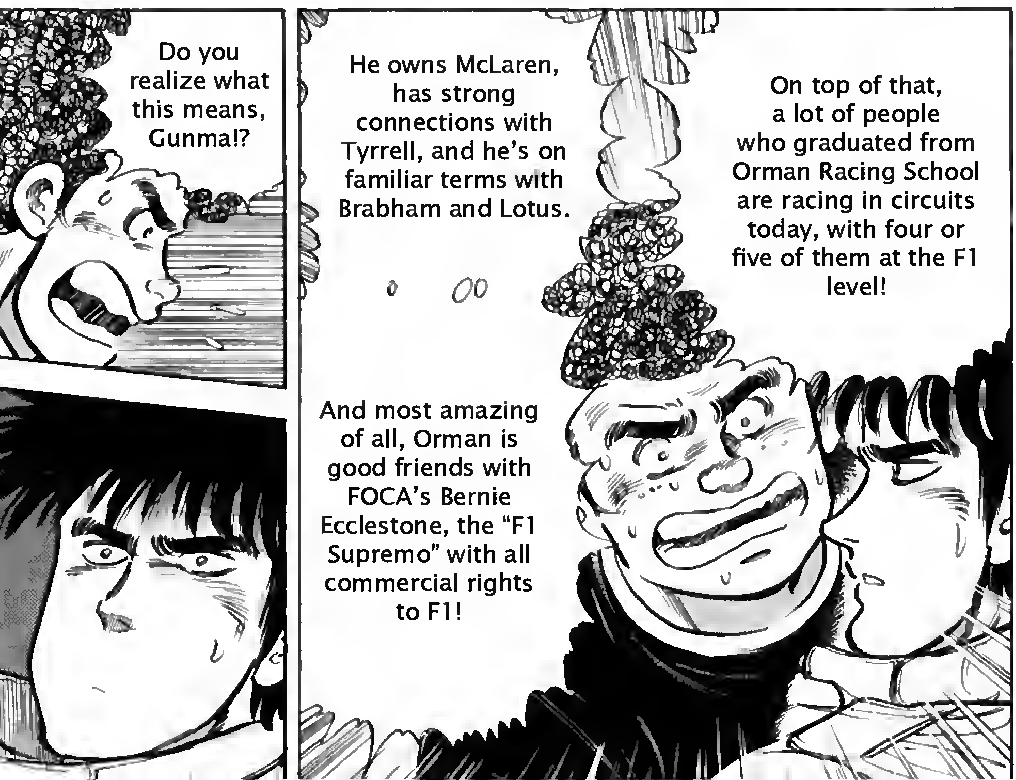
...


...all the anger went away, and I forgave you for everything.
But when I saw you wearing that racing suit...
I was so happy to see that Gunma Akagi was still active in the racing world!

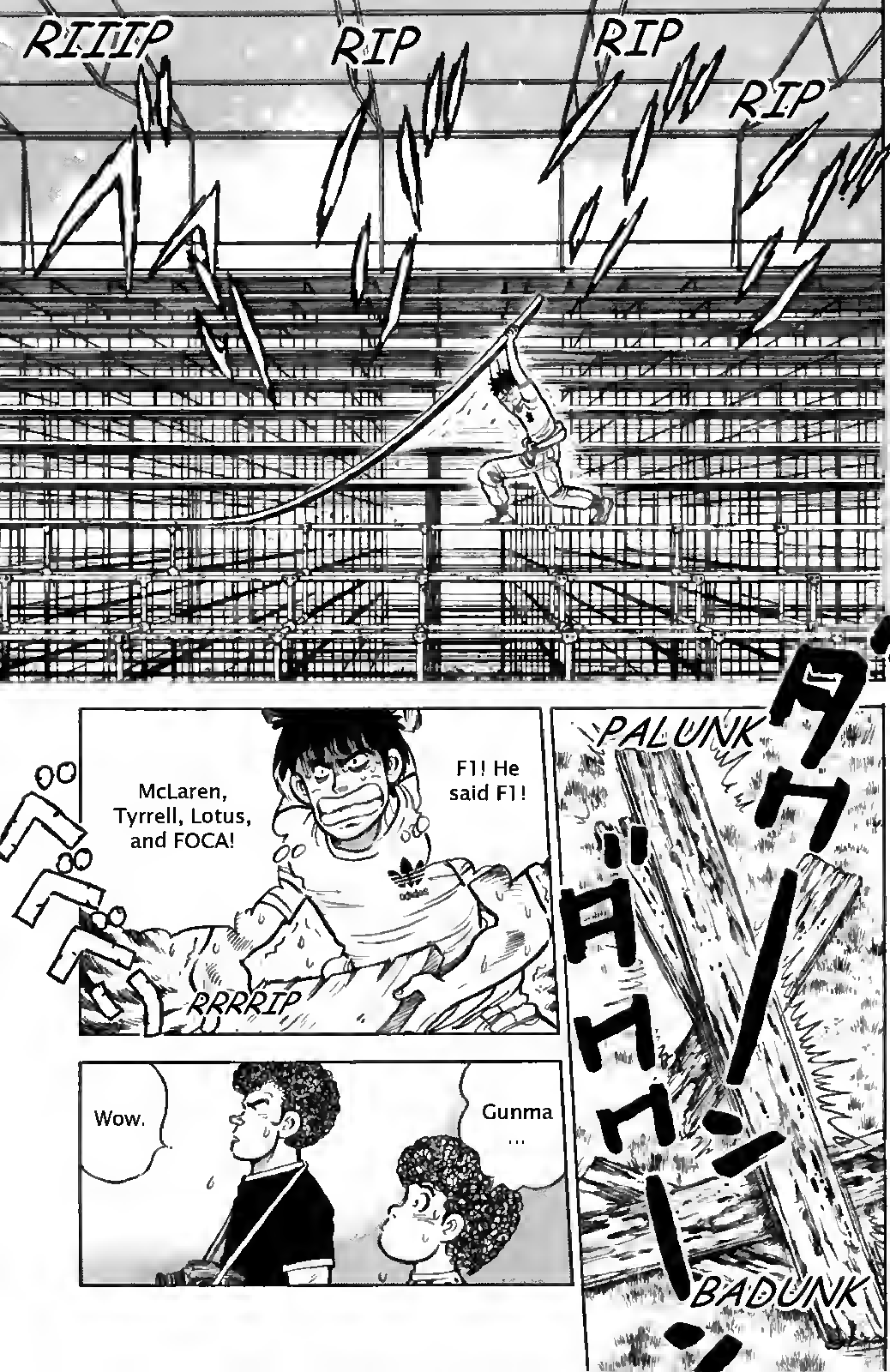
Once you quit racing...
To tell you the truth, I wanted to hit you so bad.
...I wanted to knock some sense into you.

Racing is in my blood, and there's no turning back.
...and I figured I got no choice but to race.
A lot happened, and it got me thinking...
...
This is some old bull.
That stupid old fart Orman tricked me into fixing the damn bleachers!
SMACK!
But it ain't going so well.
I don't know about no Greg, but it's that old man with the beard!
You don't mean Greg Orman, do you?
Orman?
Yeah, so what?
It's the guy who smacked you down in Macau, right?
Then it's true.


Greg Orman is a former F1 racer who retired in 1977, and now he runs a racing school at circuits all over England, including here at Silverstone!
Listen to me, Gunma!
GRAB
The school is so popular that fledgling racers from all over the world are lining up through the roof just to get in!


Do you realize what this means, Gunma!?
He owns McLaren, has strong connections with Tyrrell, and he's on familiar terms with Brabham and Lotus.
On top of that, a lot of people who graduated from Orman Racing School are racing in circuits today, with four or five of them at the F1 level!
And most amazing of all, Orman is good friends with FOCA's Bernie Ecclestone, the "F1 Supremo" with all commercial rights to F1!

Who the devil was that Asian bloke?
You all right, Orman?
Yeah, sorry to interrupt your practice run. I'm fine.
But he was wearing a racing suit.
Just some tosser. Don't mind him.
(He's probably fussing his way home by now.)
SLURP
It doesn't look that way, Orman.
!?
He said he wants to race in England, but if you ask me he's nothing more than a reckless imbecile.
I get it now. You must've turned up the notch on your specially-patented cruelty. Heh heh...


RIIIP
RIP
RIP
RIP
F1! He said F1!
McLaren, Tyrrell, Lotus, and FOCA!
RRRRIP
Wow.
Gunma ...
PALUNK
BADUNK

CREAK
I'll get 10, maybe 20 benches done at this rate! Just gotta do whatever it takes!
I'll even fix the tower, the pit, anything else he throws at me!
POP CRACK

SNAP
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP

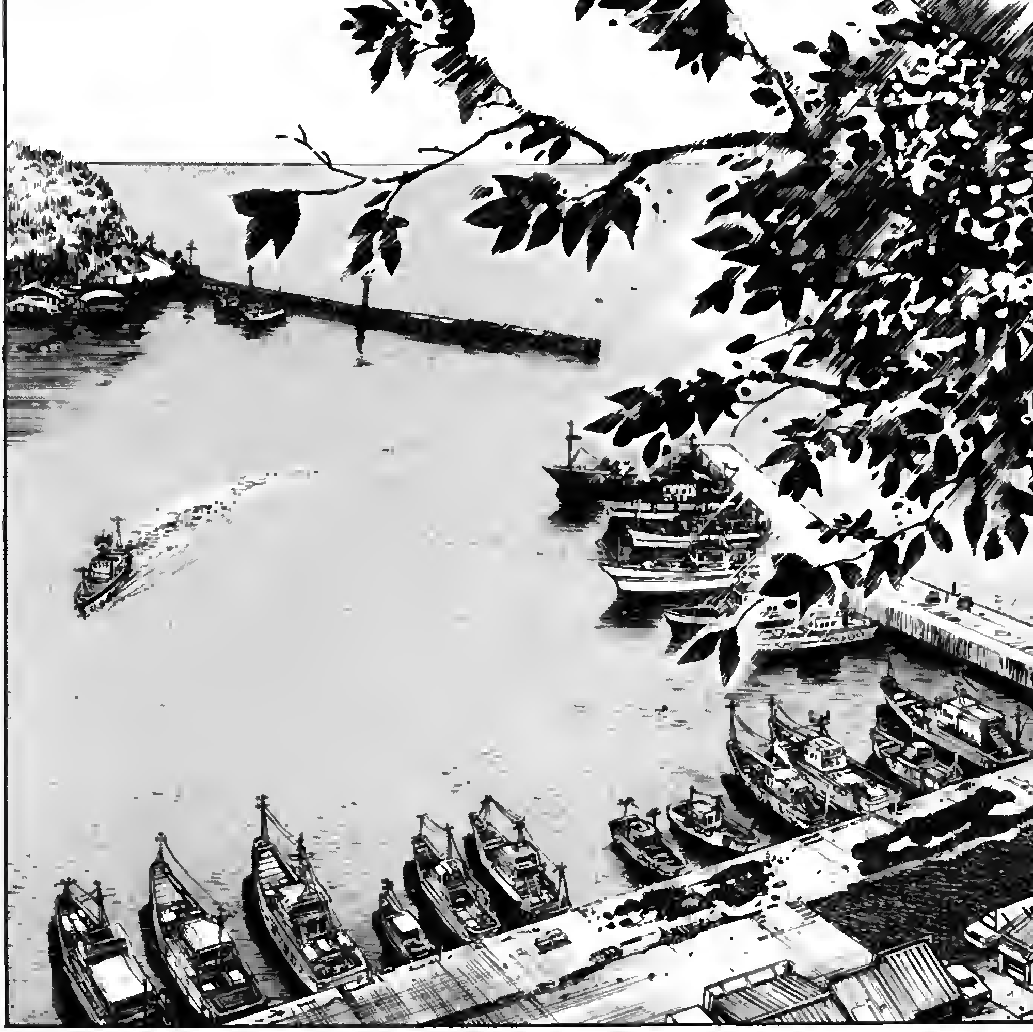
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP
NIPON
TILL

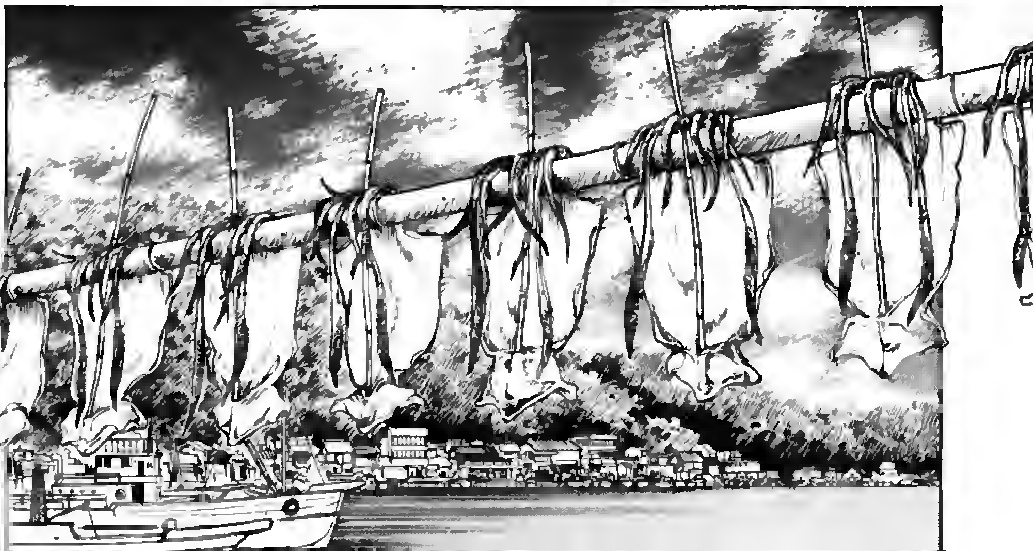
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP

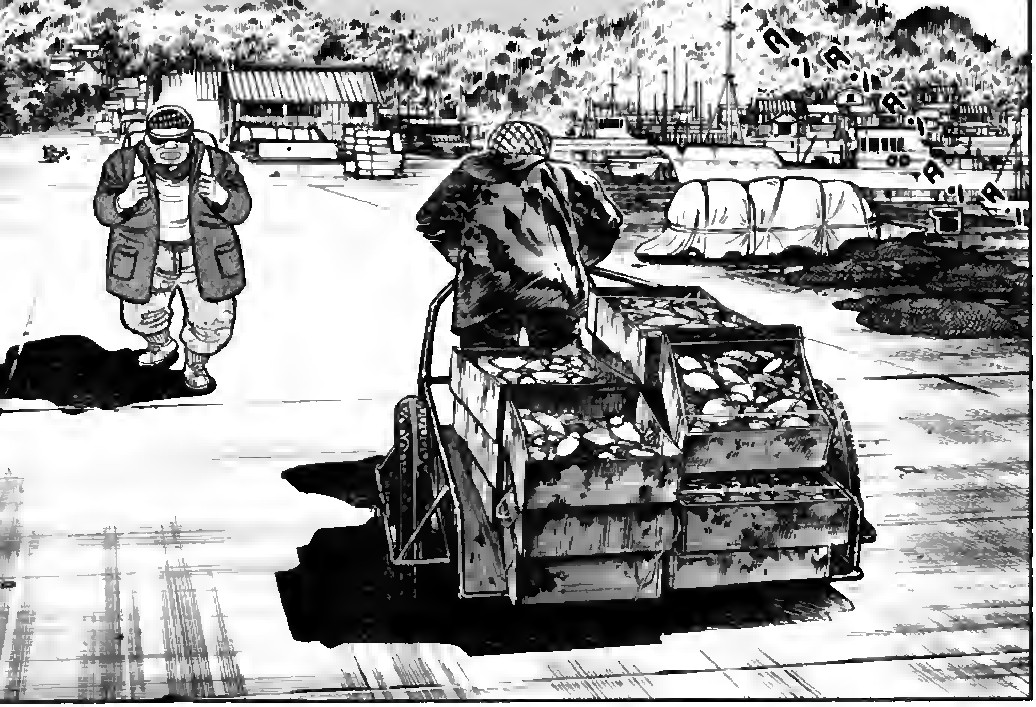
He won't last.
Hmph.
CRREAK
ギィ
SNAP
ファキ・
CRACK
ベキキ・
RIP
バキィ
RIP
バキィ
Whew.

VOL.13

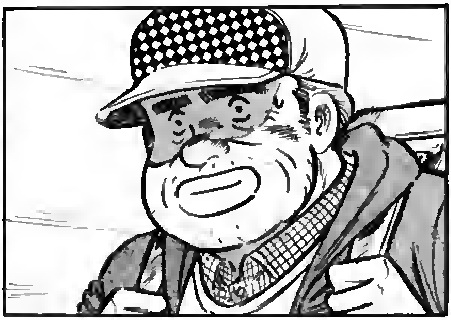
Chapter 8: Revelation



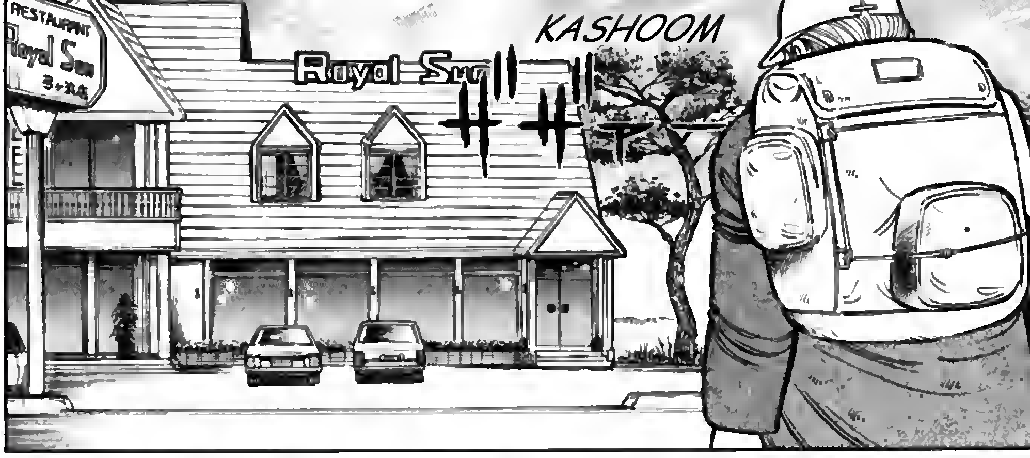


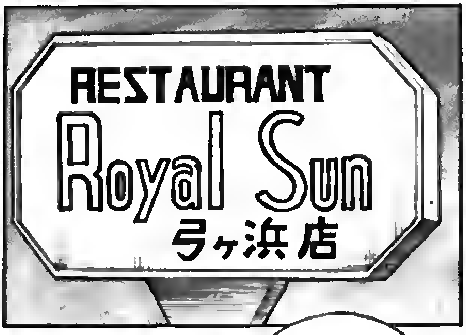


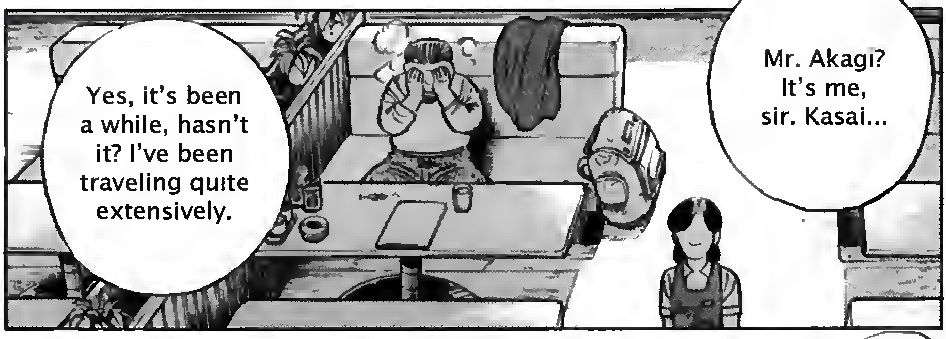
KASHOOM



VROOOOOM


KASHOOM
RESTAURANT
Royal Sun


RESTAURANT
Royal Sun
弓ヶ浜店


Yes, it's been a while, hasn't it? I've been traveling quite extensively.
Mr. Akagi? It's me, sir. Kasai...

Positive.

Yes, I finally found him.
And I have some good news.

His location...
...is several minutes from Yonago Airport.
The name's Jiro Kida.
He's a racketeer...
...doing all of Tagawa's dirty work since he picked him up.
Yes, it's that small sightseeing area...
...with a long beach stretching in front of a large mountain.
The one Koizumi Yakumo once wrote about.
He's managing a very uninteresting restaurant chain.
...
...he's trying to keep a low profile.
GRIN
It's as if...

You seem to recognize me.
チラ
GLANCE
Thank you, sir.
Great meal.
...
How about we go on a little stroll?
...Mr. Kasai, aren't you?
Yes, you're president of Akagi Group's Toho Chemicals...
KASHOOM
Chubu, Kansai, Chugoku, Kyushu, and yes, even your hometown Kagoshima.
I was fired as president...
...now I go sightseeing all over Japan.
KASHOOM
I'm not president of anything.
Just an old traveler these days.

I stopped by Mihonoseki, and they're already drying cuttlefish there.
And it's oddly cold for this time of year.
The sea is so dark in this area. It's got a nice atmosphere, but so dark compared to Kagoshima.
...
To see your dear old mother, of course.
For what!?
Miho-noseki !?
What's more, suddenly moving from Kagoshima in the south, to this lonely mountain village.
It must be sad for an old woman to leave her hometown to live in an unfamiliar land.
She's been awfully lonely.
...for killing a woman?
As compen-sation...
...by Presi-dent Tagawa.
I didn't have a choice, being put in charge of that restaurant...
SWOOM

How you hunted her down and killed her.
I mean Yuki.
What...
...do you mean?
KASHOOM
I'm sorry if I went too far.
Wait a minute.
I'm leaving.
I think you're getting senile in your old age.
Otherwise, I wouldn't be traveling the country in search of you, to buy something of very, very high value.
Maybe I really am getting senile.
...!?
THUMP

What are you alking about!?
Details of the day?
500 million yen, in unmarked bills.
The receptionist at Akagi's Main Office building witnessed you, Mr. Tagawa, and Yuki riding the elevator together on the day she died!
Don't play dumb with me! The day of Yuki's "suicide" of course!
In return I ask for the negatives, along with the details of that day.
How about it, Mr. Kida?

Hey!
...

Take this!
SHASH!

FWIP FWIP
Stupid, stupid leaves!
Damn you to hell!
FWOOH
FWOOH

Tamo-tsu's in Suzuka!
GSSHHH
GSSHHH
Is Tamo-tsu around?

Oh yeah.

Well I don't feel spry. These leaves are driving me to my grave!
You're looking spry, Granny.
BRUSH
BRUSH

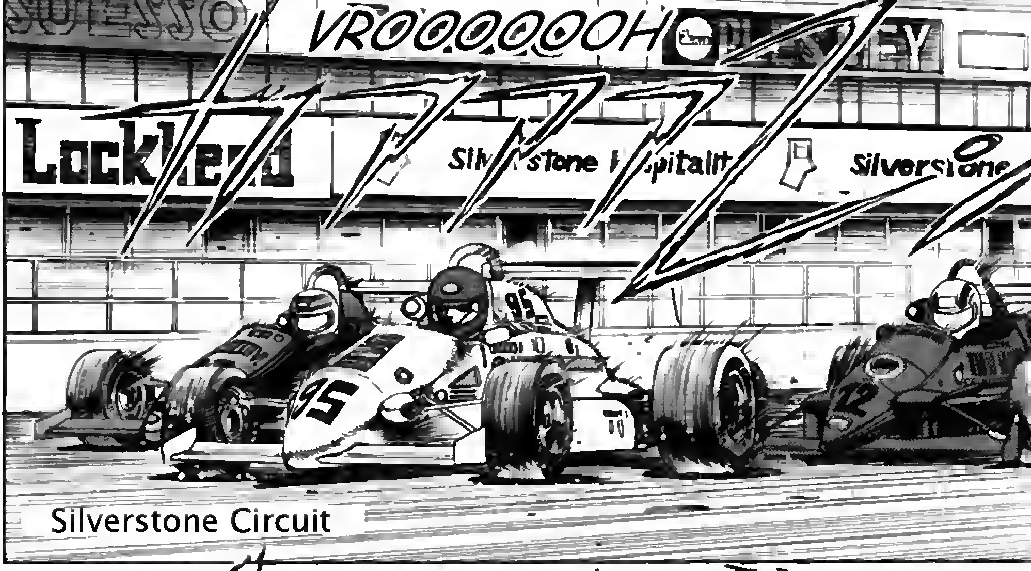
Just wondering if she's heard from Gunma.
Nothing much.
What on earth do you want with Junko?
What about Junko?
Sheesh.
For all I know he's shriveled up and died on some mountain top!
We haven't heard hide nor hair of that boy!
Oh...
Noth-ing.
So not a peep from him, huh?

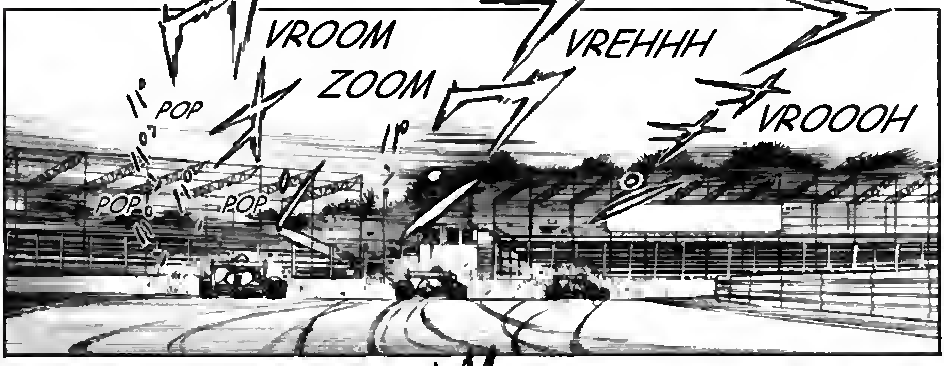
Tamotsu's going after his dream, and I can't just sit around doing nothing.
...
I'll probably start working again next month.
And there's no sign he's coming back.
It's been almost six months.
...I need to move on with my life.
But if Gunma's given up on racing...
It's not as if I've been waiting for him or anything.
Anyway, I'm outta here. Thanks for the coffee.
Well, I heard a little from Tamotsu. Heh heh...
Sorry to bother you with all this, Goro.

You went to England?
Yeah, had a little job there.
Here's a little present from England.
Oh yeah!
Well, thank you!
And one more thing.
Some pictures I took over there. Have a look when I'm gone.
I'm kind of embarrassed.
I wasn't sure what to do with these, but I think it's best that you have them.
What are they?
Okay?
Don't get your hopes up.
?
KACHUK

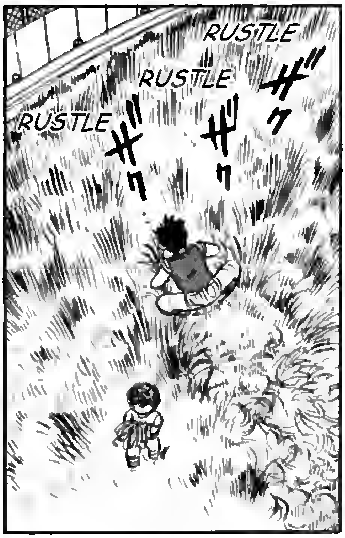
KACHUNK
...
!?
!
FLUTTER
FLUTTER
FLUTTER

Ju...
Junko
...!?
FAMILY
CREW'S
Lucas
10


VROOOOOOH
Lockheed
Silverstone
95
Silverstone Circuit

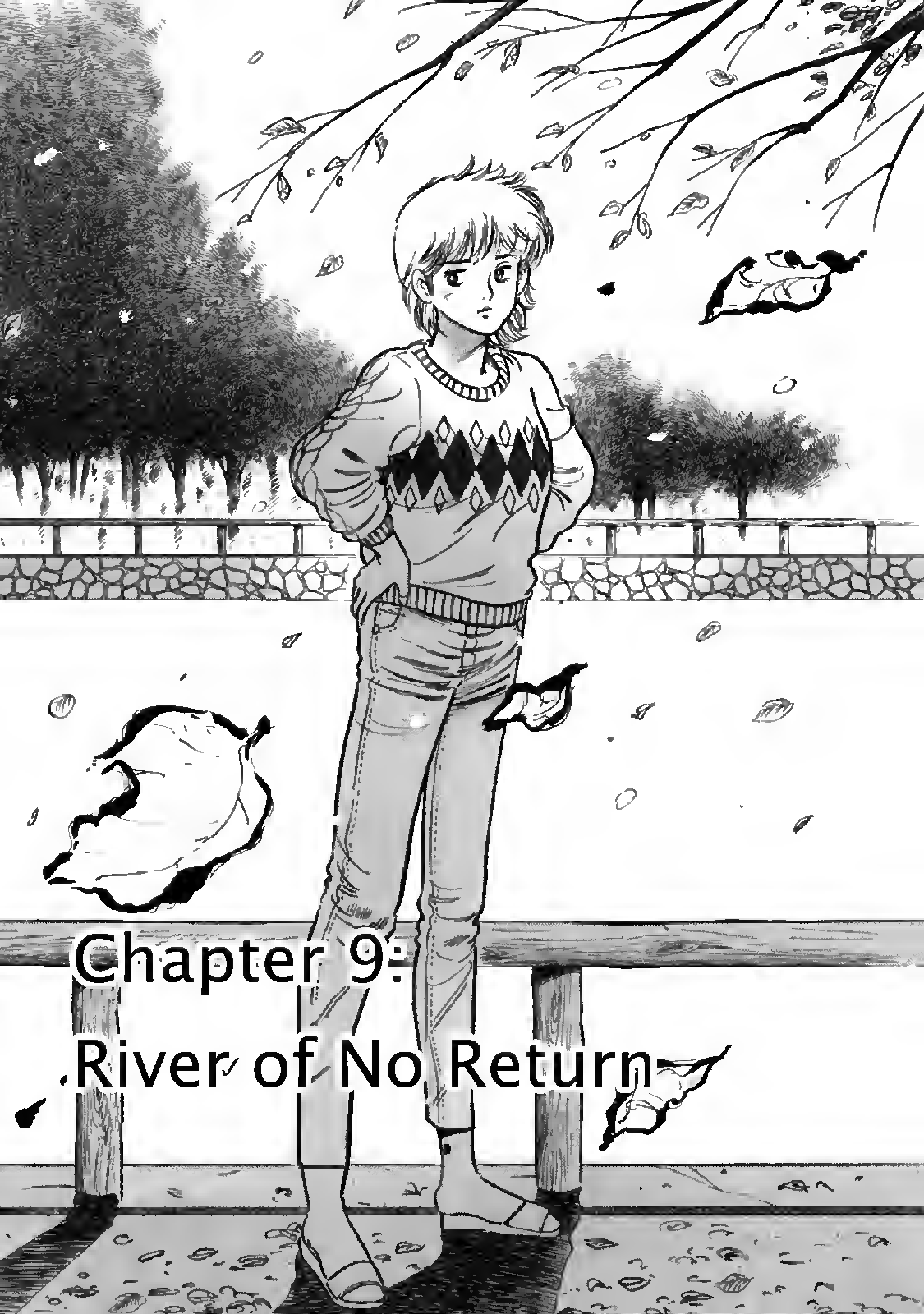

VROOM
ZOOM
VREHHH
VROOOH
POP
POP
POP

SHUK
SHUK

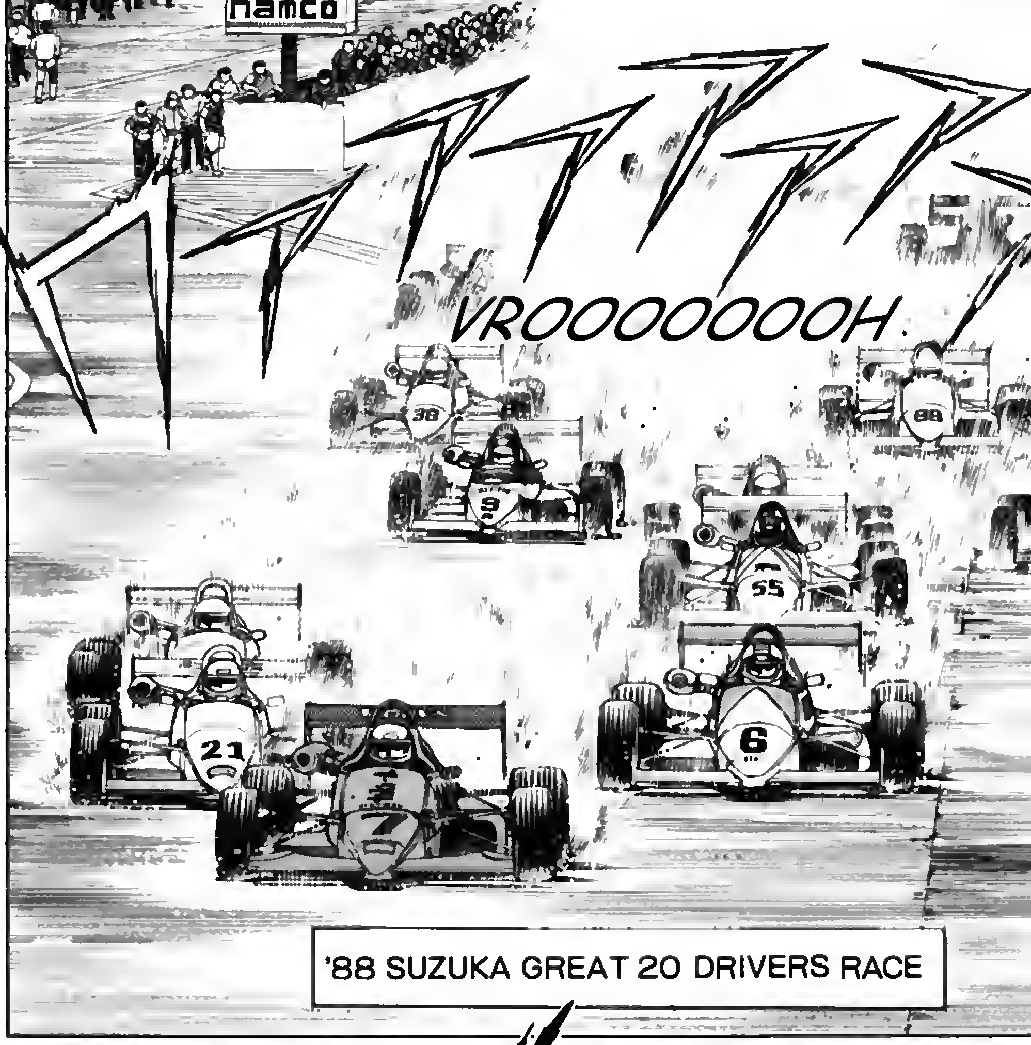

RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE

All right!
...
Cut faster!
Gunma! You slow!
Paint! Paint!
After you cut grass, you paint!
You paint!
You got that, Gunma?
Hmph!
Big old jerk!
I get it al-ready!

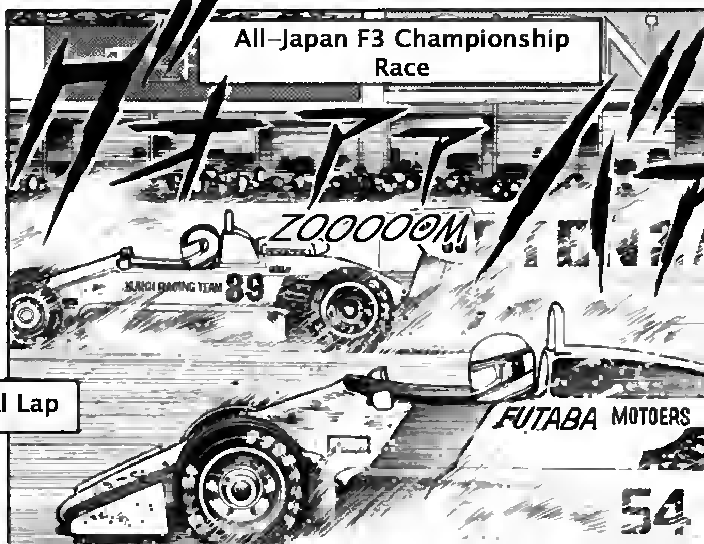
Next thing you know, it's gonna cool down and the season will be over.
It's already fall though.
How long does he expect me to do this crap!?
SHUK
SHUK
Old man thinks I'm his damn slave!
But eventually I'll get my reward!
SHUK
At what!?
Don't you think he got good?
But Gunma ...
Yeah! As cheap labor maybe!
SNIFF
He's a prideful English gentleman, and he's trying to learn Japanese.
That means he's interested in you.
Speaking Japanese!
It'll be winter soon.
This sucks!



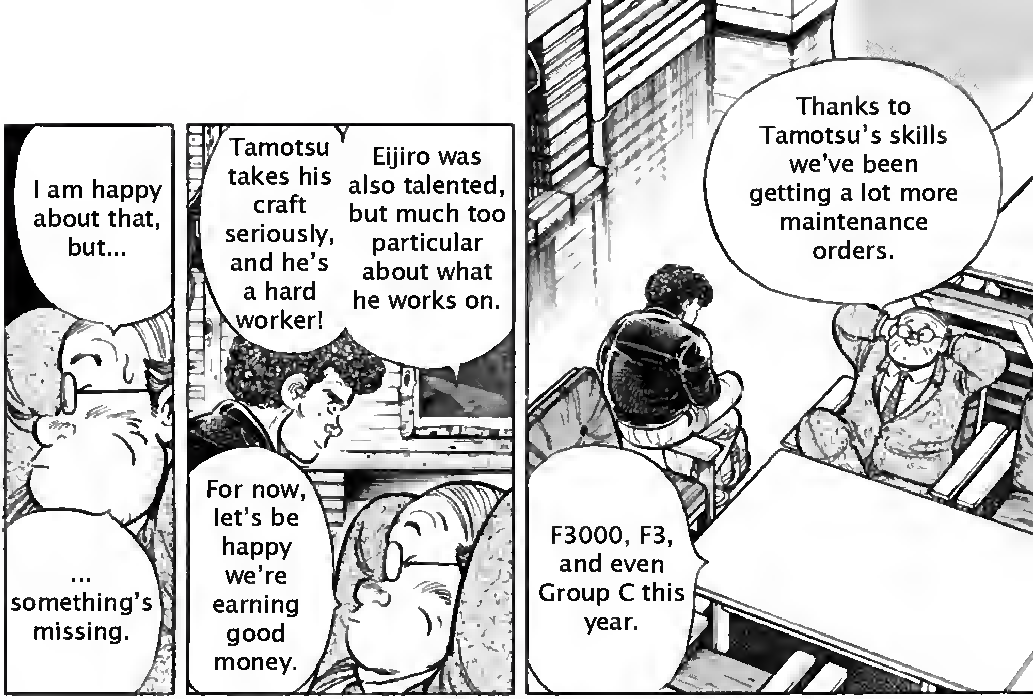
Chapter 9: River of No Return


Namco
VROOOOOOOH
'88 SUZUKA GREAT 20 DRIVERS RACE

Final Lap


All-Japan F3 Championship Race
ZOOOOOM
39
FUTABA MOTOERS

At least he's still on the track.
No matter how good the mechanic is, we can't get anywhere if the driver's lacking in skill.
BLOW
And our guy's second to last.
Koga-wa's in first.
AH.. AH..
ACHOO
Damn you, Gun-ma...
SNIFFLE
I think I caught a cold. I'm going back to the hotel.
Hmph.
Business is booming though.
As a racing garage at least.
I feel bad for Tamotsu in all this.
BLOW
Where did you go?
It's been six months now.

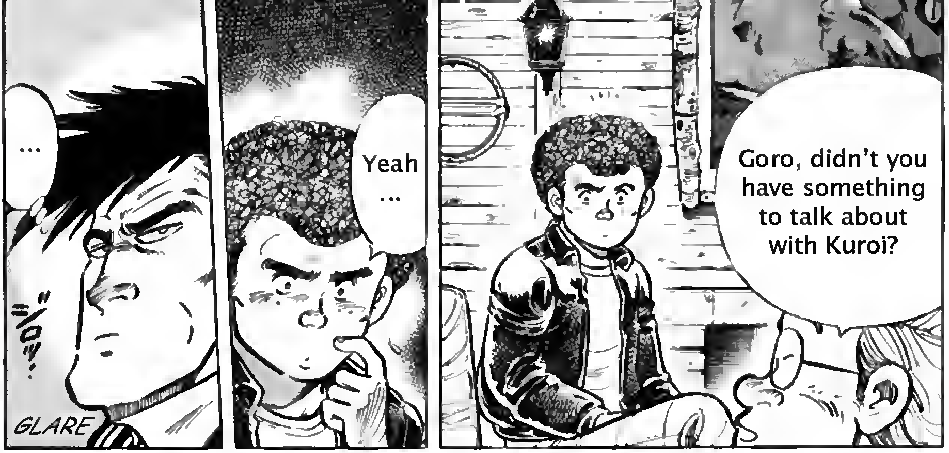

I am happy about that, but...
... something's missing.
Tamotsu takes his craft seriously, and he's a hard worker!
Eijiro was also talented, but much too particular about what he works on.
For now, let's be happy we're earning good money.
Thanks to Tamotsu's skills we've been getting a lot more maintenance orders.
F3000, F3, and even Group C this year.

Find yourself a hot little honey there?
By the way, Goro. You spent an awful lot of time in England.
Leave me alone.
Is that why you're sitting here rambling to yourself even though we're in the championship?

...about that.
Well, I need to talk to Kuroi...

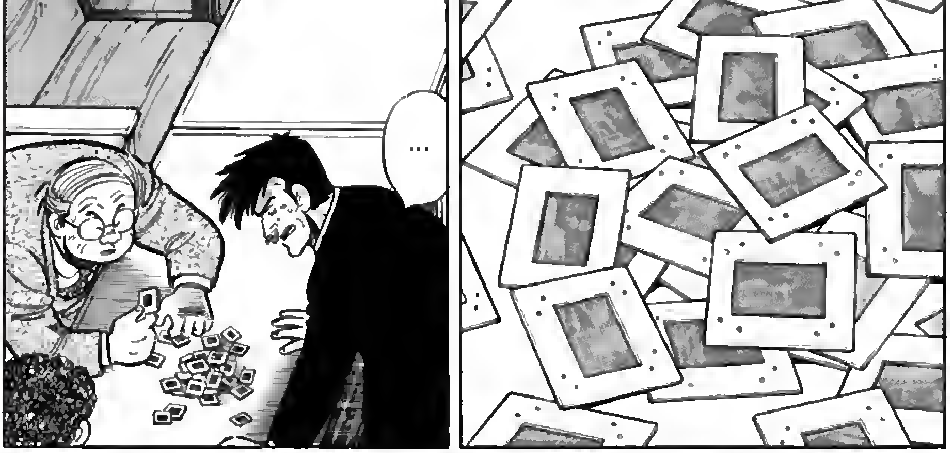
AHOO
SLAM

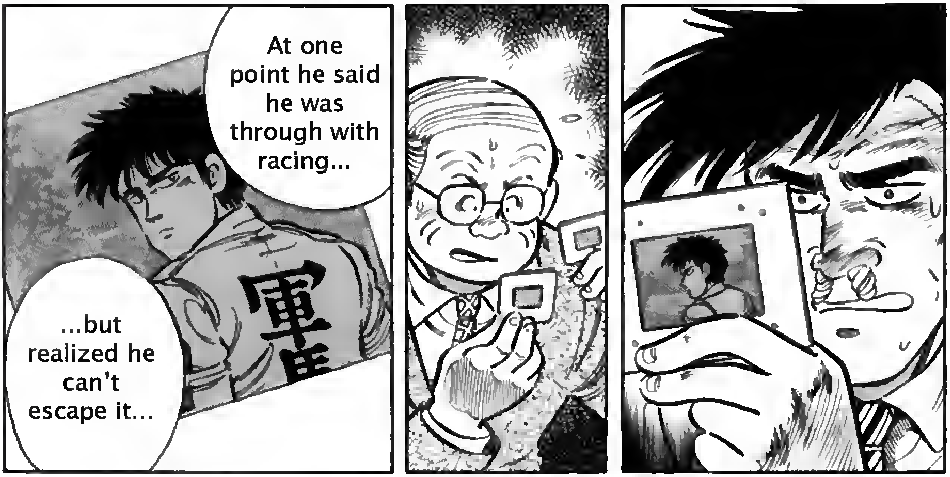
...
THUNK
Yasu! I'm done with racing!
SNIFF
What happened to you, Kuroi? And how'd the race go?
We've tried a few of them to take Gunma's place, hoping that by some miracle we've found a diamond in the rough.
SNIFFLE
I've got people who wanna race lining up to the moon.
Some of them with decent credentials, like Group A, FJ, and F3.
We're making good money as a racing garage.
You said it. There's no point in racing if there's no excitement.
There's no one like Gunma in that pool of hungry kids!
BLOW
But who am I kidding?
...
...I feel bad for Tamotsu.
Except ...

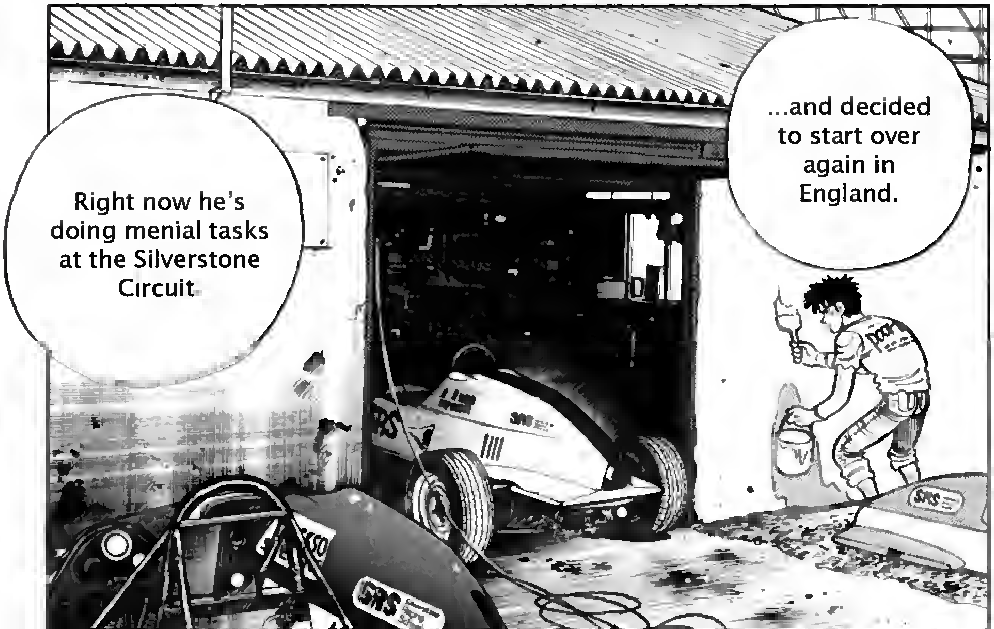

...
Yeah ...
GLARE
Goro, didn't you have something to talk about with Kuroi?

Let's hear it, Goro.
?
It's no big deal.
Ah, never mind.

SPLISSHH
Wh...!
What!?
...I found Gunma.
When I was in England...
...

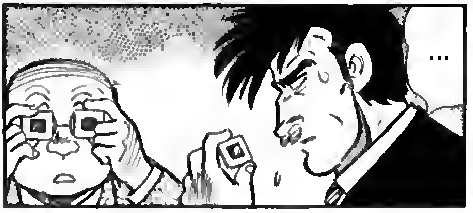

...


At one point he said he was through with racing...
...but realized he can't escape it...

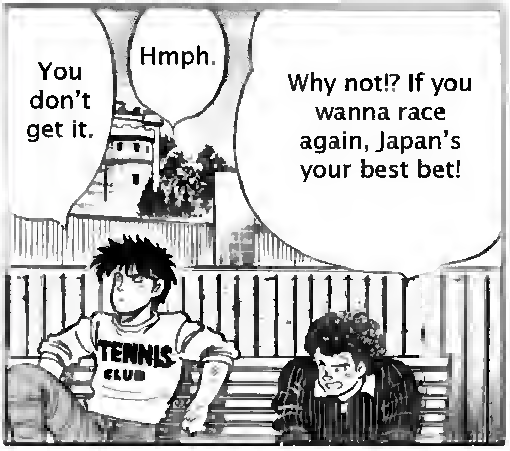

Right now he's doing menial tasks at the Silverstone Circuit
...and decided to start over again in England.

...with a pub singer named Sako and a Chinese kid named Peabow.
Just the three of them.

He lives in downtown London...
...in a dirty one-room apart-ment...


...

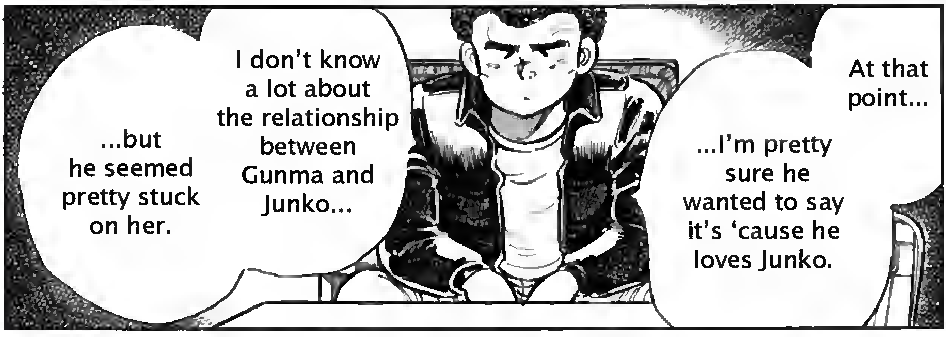
I spent about two weeks with him.


You don't get it.
Hmph.
Why not!? If you wanna race again, Japan's your best bet!

Nope.
Aren't you coming back to Japan, Gunma?

It's like you're throwing away all that money she supported you with.
I can see why you'd feel that way...
...but you've really gone overboard.
I heard about that girl named Yuki. Is that what's wrong?
This is the only way.
I can't help it.
Well, you can't pay her back now that she's gone!
I couldn't do what Yuki wanted.
...I don't think I coulda done what she wanted.
Even if she was alive...

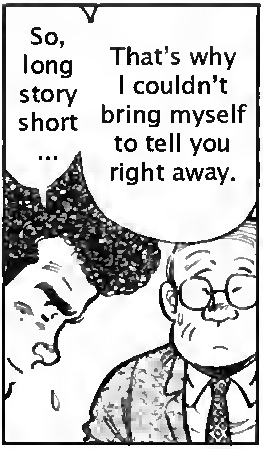
Even if she was still alive, I...
You got that, Goro?


...but he seemed pretty stuck on her.
I don't know a lot about the relationship between Gunma and Junko...
At that point...
...I'm pretty sure he wanted to say it's 'cause he loves Junko.

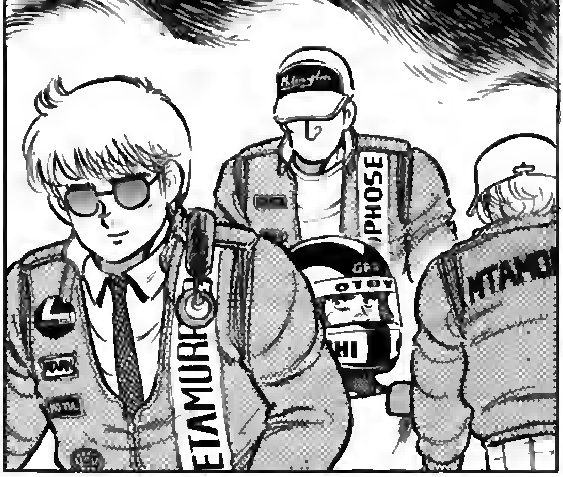
...is done with Japan.
So Gunma ...

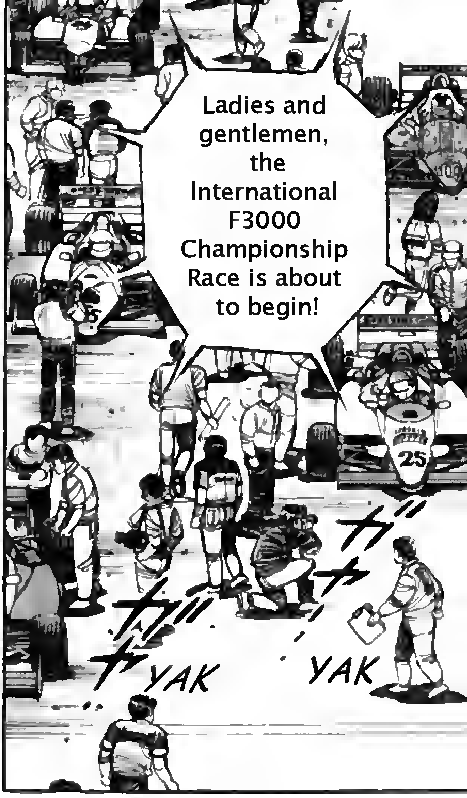
...the woman he truly loves, the team, the racing, everything about Japan...
The woman who was supporting him but passed away...
...he's done with it.

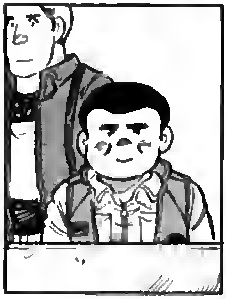
...Gunma's never coming back to Japan.
Most likely.

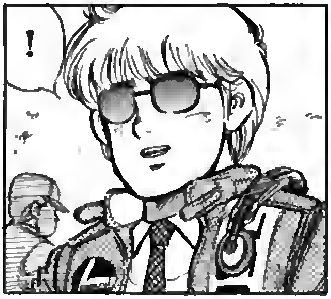

So, long story short ...
That's why I couldn't bring myself to tell you right away.

...


ETAMURA
PHOSE

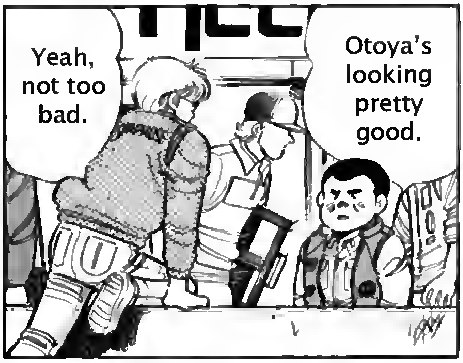

Ladies and gentlemen, the International F3000 Championship Race is about to begin!
YAK
YAK




!

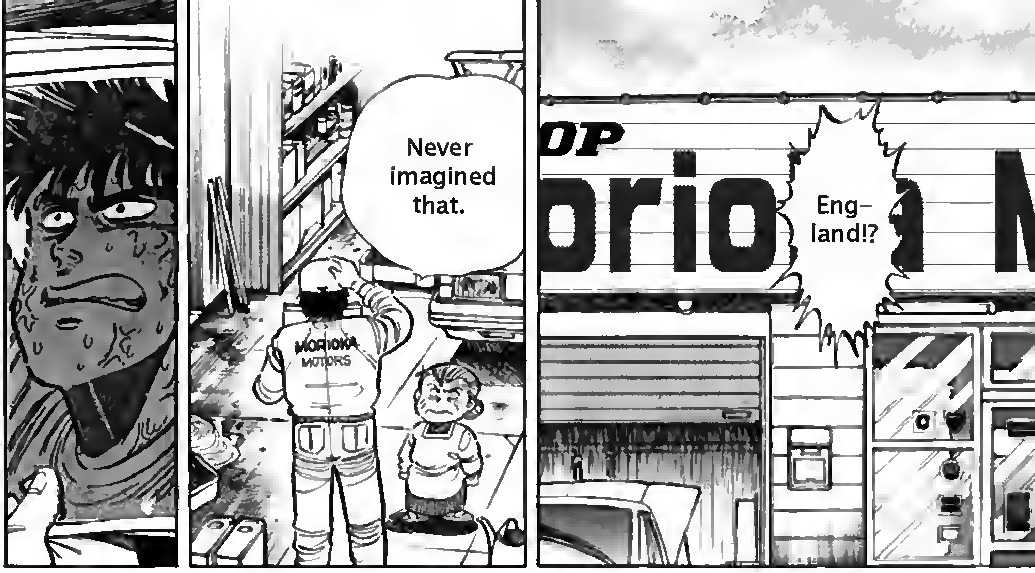
Nothin' at all.

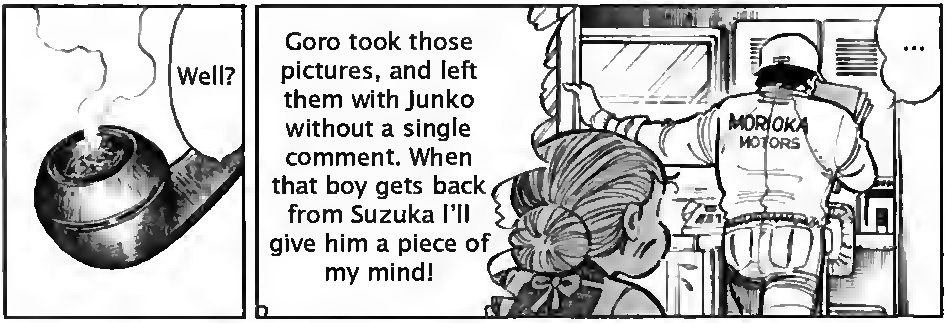
By the way, have you heard anything from Gunma?

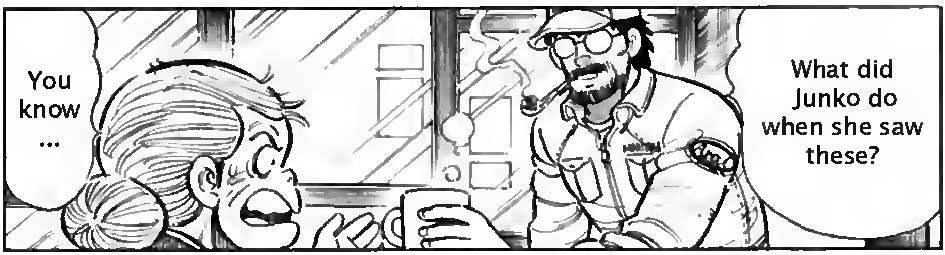

Yeah, not too bad.
Otoya's looking pretty good.

Seems your stallion is grazing in better pastures now!
OTOYA
OTOYA
Hey little piggy!
METAMORPHOSE

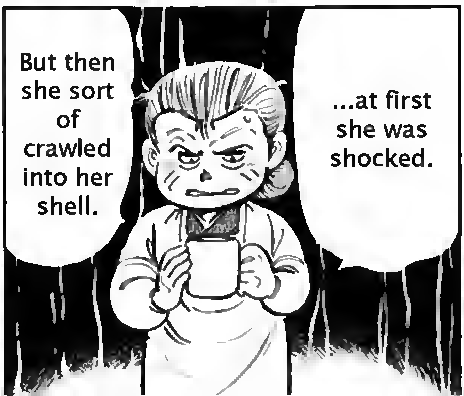
Sorry about that.
It's fine.
...
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
Or did he lose his confidence and start pulling a cart?
...
Good luck.
ZOOOOOM
...how do we break this to Tamotsu?
Hey, Kuroi...


Never imagined that.
MORIOKA MOTORS
Eng-land!?


Well?
Goro took those pictures, and left them with Junko without a single comment. When that boy gets back from Suzuka I'll give him a piece of my mind!
...
MORIOKA MOTORS


You know ...
What did Junko do when she saw these?

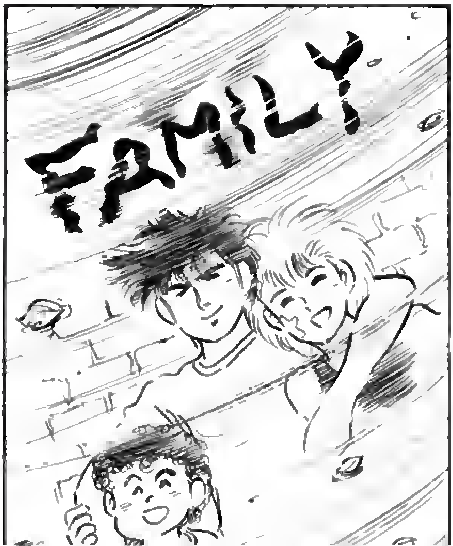
This one right here must have stung.

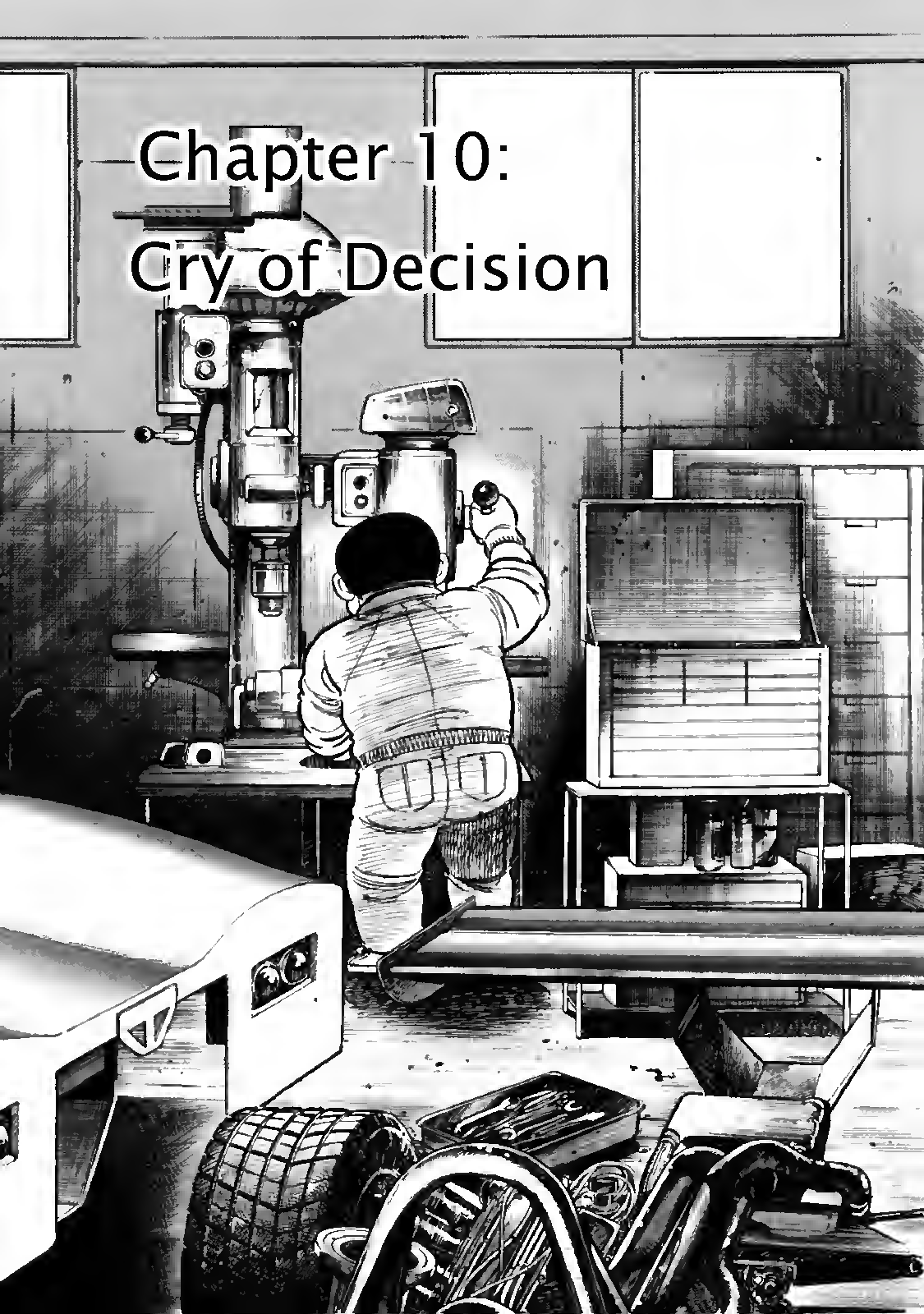

But then she sort of crawled into her shell.
...at first she was shocked.

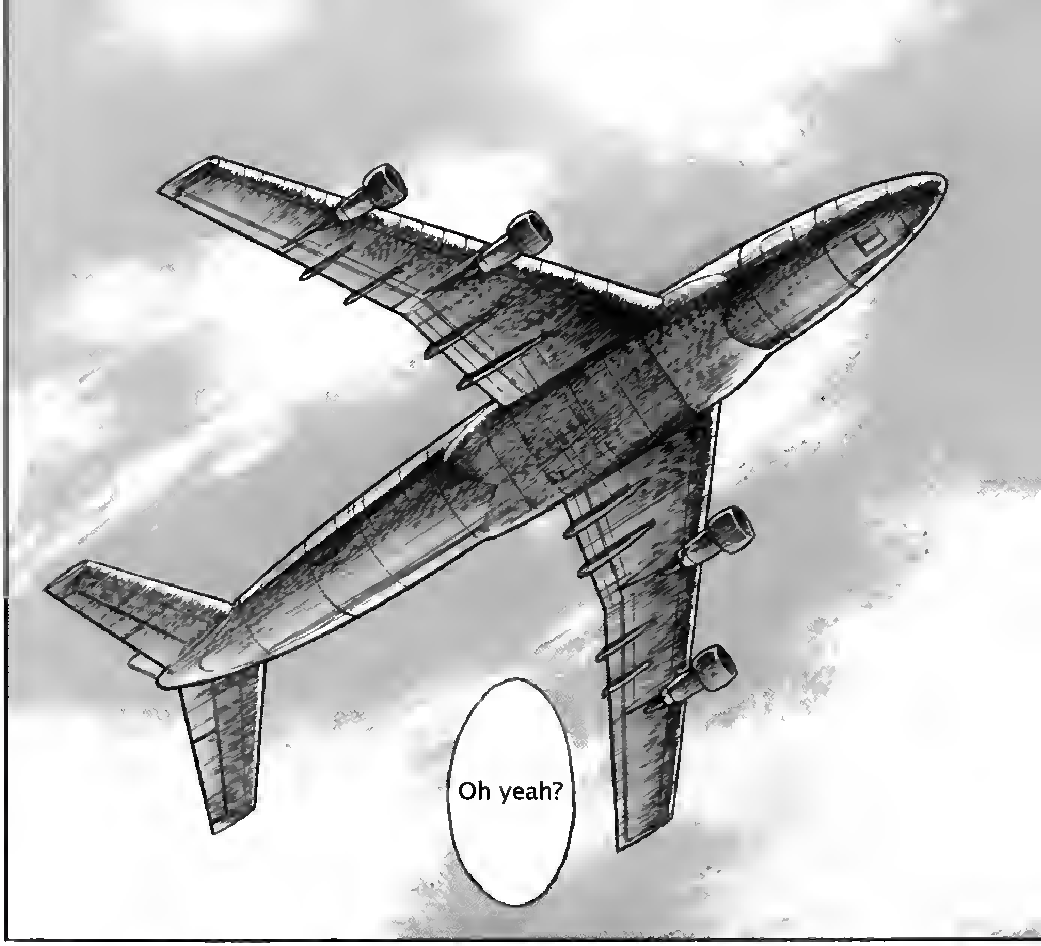
But this is a relief.
Guess he's quite the ladies' man.
Who could this woman be?
FAMILY
CREW'S
I'll be going to England soon!
But not driving yet apparently.
MORIOKA MOTORS
...and he's wearing a racing suit.
He looks healthy...
To slip a rope over his scrawny neck and hang him! Or rather... bring him back to Japan.
To do what?
Yeah?
Are you serious?
...
...make him marry Junko!
And then...
SLAM

I hate to see her so miserable.
Oh...
I get it.
These past sixth months I've really grown closer to Junko as a woman.
Since Gunma left, it's easy to see how much she loves him!
Serious as a heart attack!
And she keeps her feelings bottled up inside, which is even worse.
Whether it's Ryuji or Gunma, she always loses the one she loves.
R.I.P
Gunma, you no good...!
So what!
A French female author wrote that.
"Love is the whole history of a woman's life, it is but an episode in a man's."

I just mean that Junko's fine...
...she can write her own history, Granny.


FAMILY


Chapter 10:
Cry of Decision

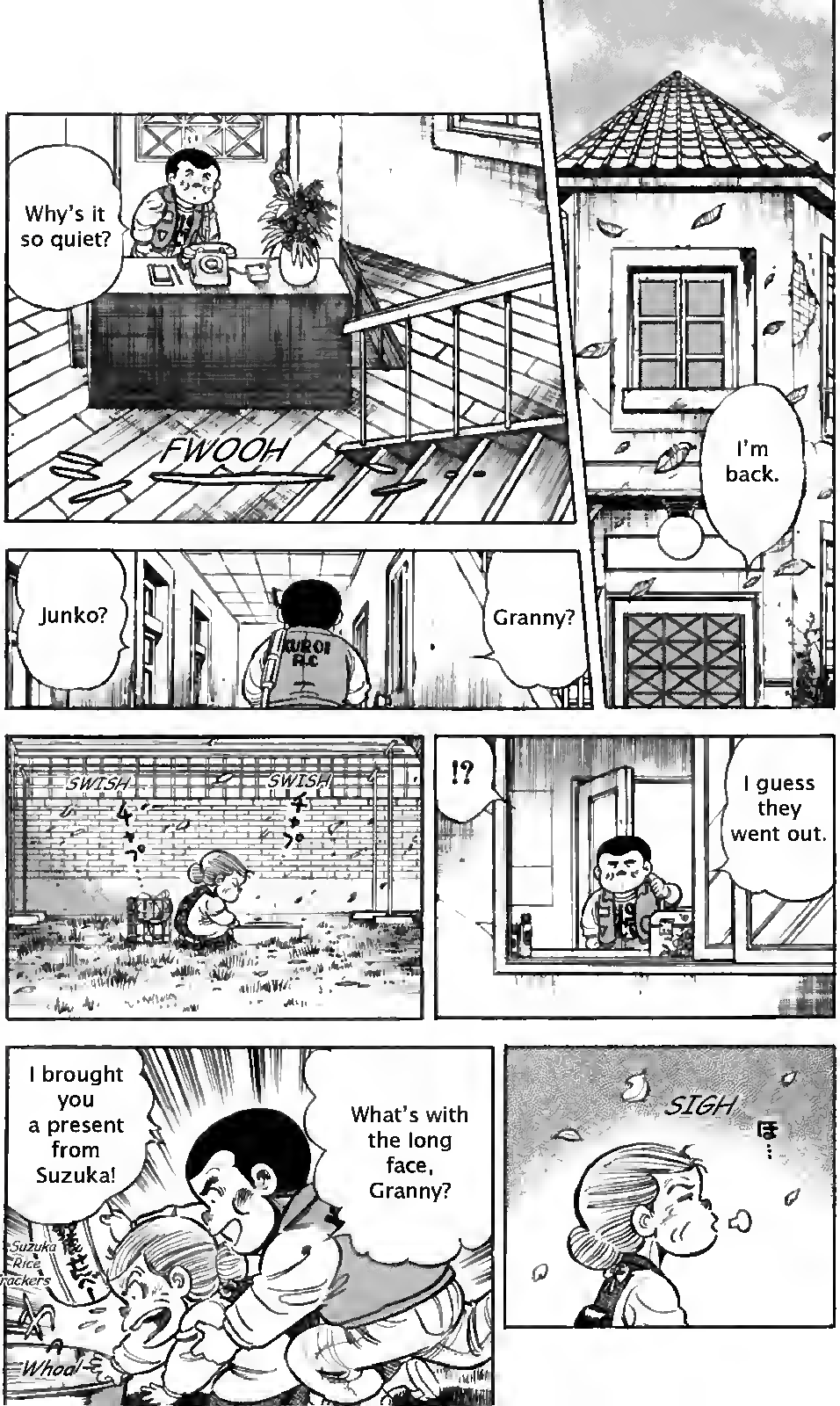

Oh yeah?

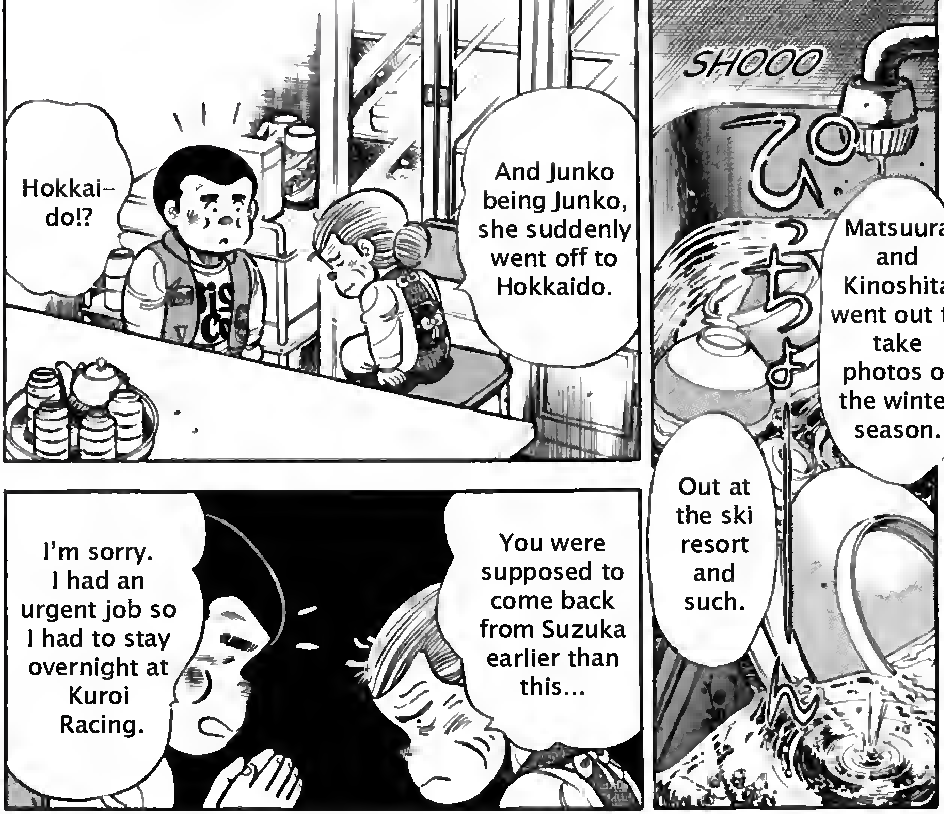
FLUTTER

So Gunma ...
ゴォー…
VEEEEEEH
...don't wanna come back to Japan.

I see...
That's what Goro said.
Well, that's it for me.
HA HA
But at least we know where he is now!
Right.
...
Oh.
Of course, of course. Ha ha...
What? I just meant my break's over.
I've gotta assemble a car starting this afternoon.
You can't be thinking of going to England!
What!? But... where will you go!
GULP

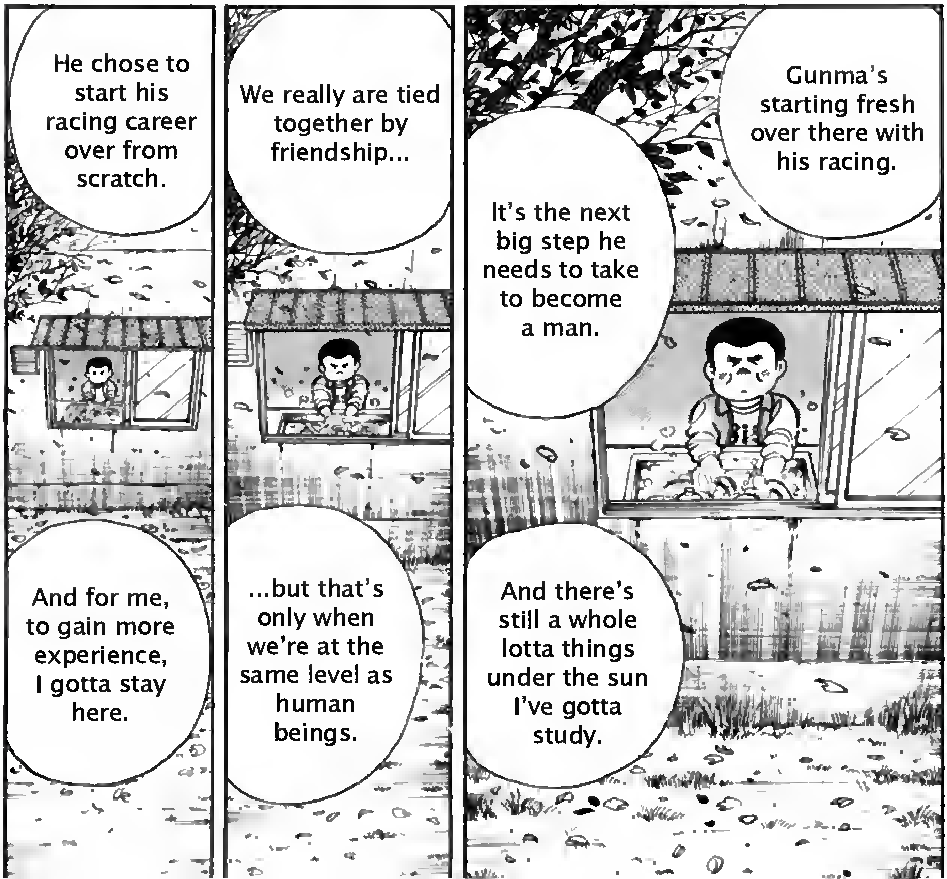
KUROI
Pretty odd.
Even after finding out Gunma's where-abouts after six months...
Hmm...
...he seems pretty indifferent.
No way.
Could this mean... Tamotsu doesn't care about Gunma anymore?
...he's really bothered by it.
The truth is...
He's just considering our feelings.
...
If Tamotsu were to leave us, the Kuroi Racing Factory would hit some very hard times.


Why's it so quiet?
FWOOH
I'm back.
Junko?
Granny?
SWISH
SWISH
!?
I guess they went out.
I brought you a present from Suzuka!
Suzuka Rice Crackers
Whoa!
What's with the long face, Granny?
SIGH
ほ…


Hokkai-do!?
And Junko being Junko, she suddenly went off to Hokkaido.
SHOOO
Matsuura and Kinoshita went out to take photos of the winter season.
Out at the ski resort and such.
I'm sorry. I had an urgent job so I had to stay overnight at Kuroi Racing.
You were supposed to come back from Suzuka earlier than this...
Blow your nose.
PFFFF
Everyone's too busy with their own lives to spend time with an old woman like me!
Oh don't worry about it.
Sure. The racing season's over, so I'll be coming home every day.
Really?
Okay, Granny?
Work's been slow, so I'll be able to stay for awhile.
KUROI
R.C

!?
Yeah, I heard. Mr. Kuroi showed me the pictures this morning.
Goro tracked him down.
I found out where Gunma's staying.
Aren't you going to England?
Good-ness, don't you care?
And you're fine with that!?
Why should I have to go to England?
With what?
Tamo-tsu!
ROAR
SLAM
Because you and Gunma are the best of friends, that's why!
That's true.
Hmm...

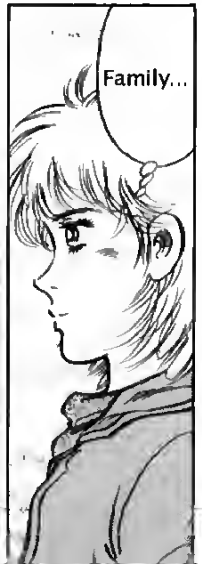
...
It makes perfect sense that you go find him in England!
THUD
Well then...
Granny ...


He chose to start his racing career over from scratch.
And for me, to gain more experience, I gotta stay here.
We really are tied together by friendship...
...but that's only when we're at the same level as human beings.
Gunma's starting fresh over there with his racing.
It's the next big step he needs to take to become a man.
And there's still a whole lotta things under the sun I've gotta study.

...no matter how far apart we are...
...the time will come when I need him, and he needs me again!
Both Gunma and me, we gotta keep growing.
And as we both grow more experienced as human beings...
To see Ruiko.
Oh...
Ms. Ruiko!?
Anyway, how come Junko went to Hokkaido?
KUROI R.C
SLURP
...

That philosophy may work between men...
...but for a man and a woman...
...it's just not enough.

You must be shocked at how much I've changed.
I'm so happy you came to see me.


Family...

Hm hm...
I sure get my hands dirty though. This ranch keeps me busy from dusk to dawn.

No, it's great. You look so vibrant.

VICTRY

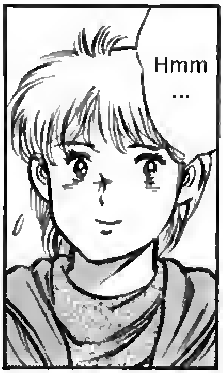
That philosophy may work between men...
...but for a man and a woman...
...it's just not enough.
VICTRY

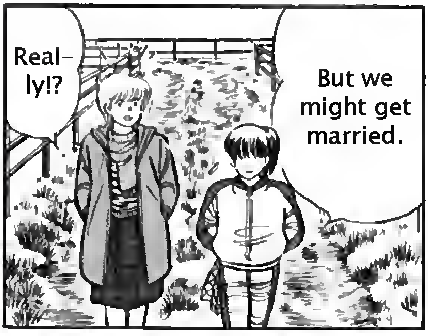
You must be shocked at how much I've changed.
I'm so happy you came to see me.
Family...
Hm hm...
I sure get my hands dirty though. This ranch keeps me busy from dusk to dawn.
No, it's great. You look so vibrant.

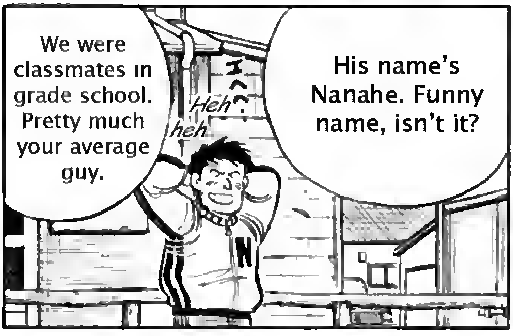
...I'm starting to forget.
Little by little...

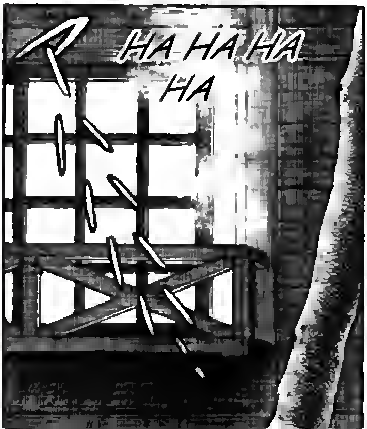
I feel like I made the right choice coming back.
Staying busy like this gets my mind off of Hijiri.

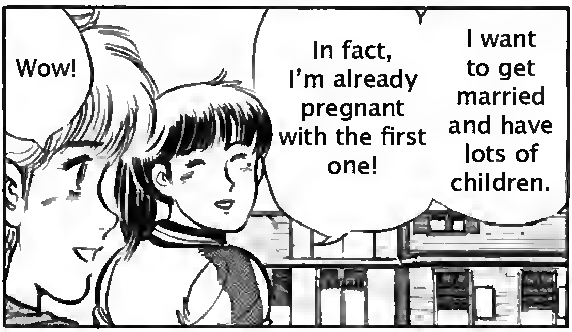
Be right there.
Ruiko, tea's ready.

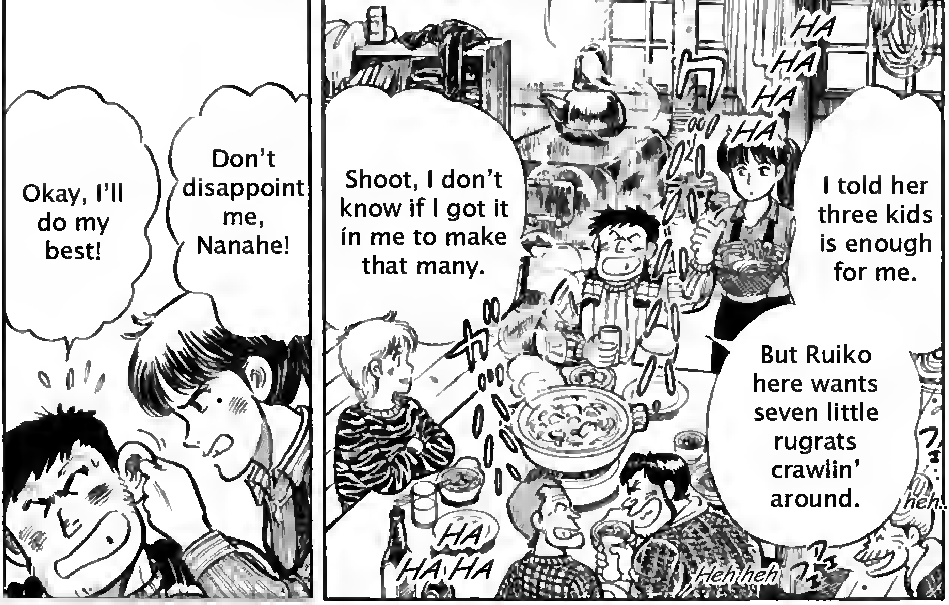

Hmm ...

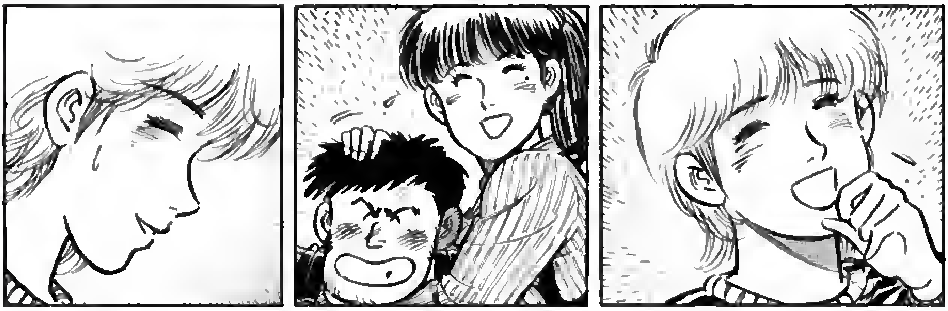

Real-ly!?
But we might get married.

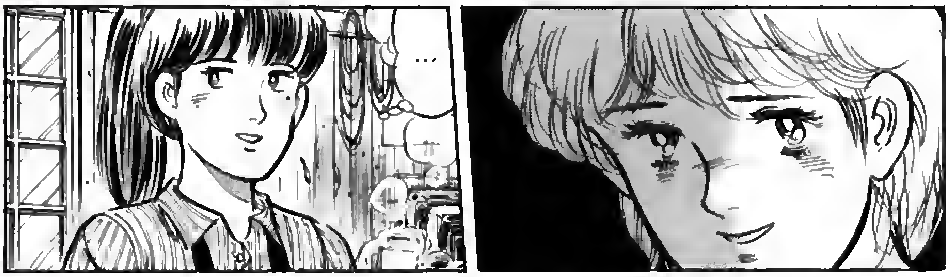

We were classmates in grade school. Pretty much your average guy.
Heh heh
His name's Nanahe. Funny name, isn't it?


HA HA HA HA


Wow!
In fact, I'm already pregnant with the first one!
I want to get married and have lots of children.


Okay, I'll do my best!
Don't disappoint me, Nanahe!
Shoot, I don't know if I got it in me to make that many.
HA HA HA HA
I told her three kids is enough for me.
But Ruiko here wants seven little rugrats crawlin' around.
HA HA HA
Heh heh
heh...




...

PLUNK

I'm glad I came.
Ruiko's an inspiration.
Can I join you?
Oh, sure...
Not yet.
Are you asleep, Junko?

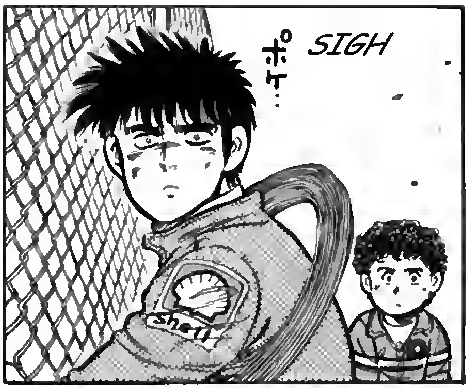
Uh-huh.
Really?
Yeah, but your house is nice and warm.
Isn't it cold here?
Huh!?
Want me to hold you?
Hey.
When I look at you now, it reminds me of how I was.
I was so lonely then...
...and I cried when you held me.
!
I wanna pay you back!
Don't you remember when Hijiri died? You held me so tight at the hospital.

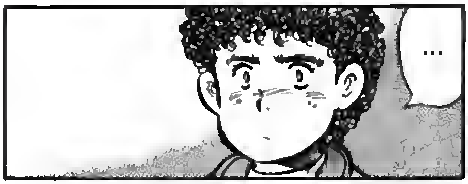
And my breasts have grown.
I've been doing so much physical labor, so I'm in great shape.
You can lean on me.
Don't be bashful. I'll be a mother soon, after all.
Yeah.
Let it out like I did.
Go ahead...
...and cry.
...!

You came to Hokkaido...
When I went to get you at the airport...
...I knew right away.
...so that you can cry.
SIGH

I'm
going to
England!

Chapter 11: Flames


SIGH
shell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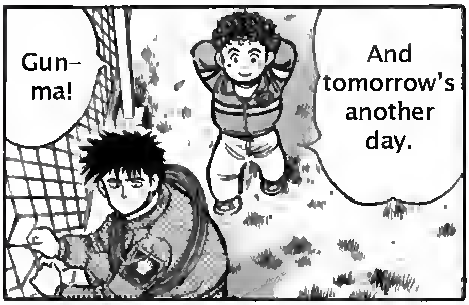
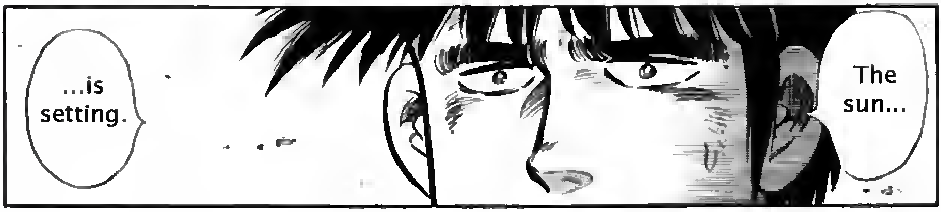
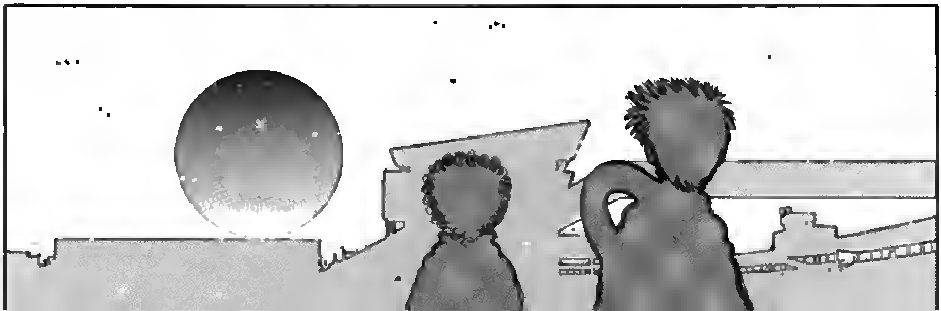

Gun-ma!
And tomorrow's another day.

The sun's setting.
Marlboro F1

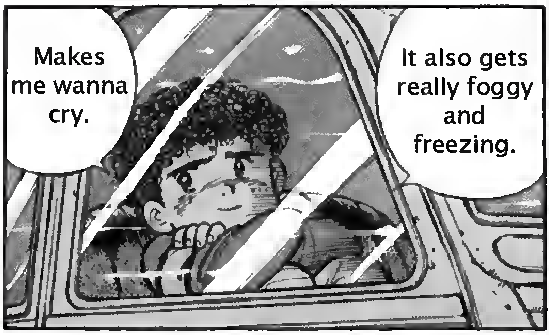

...is setting.
The sun...

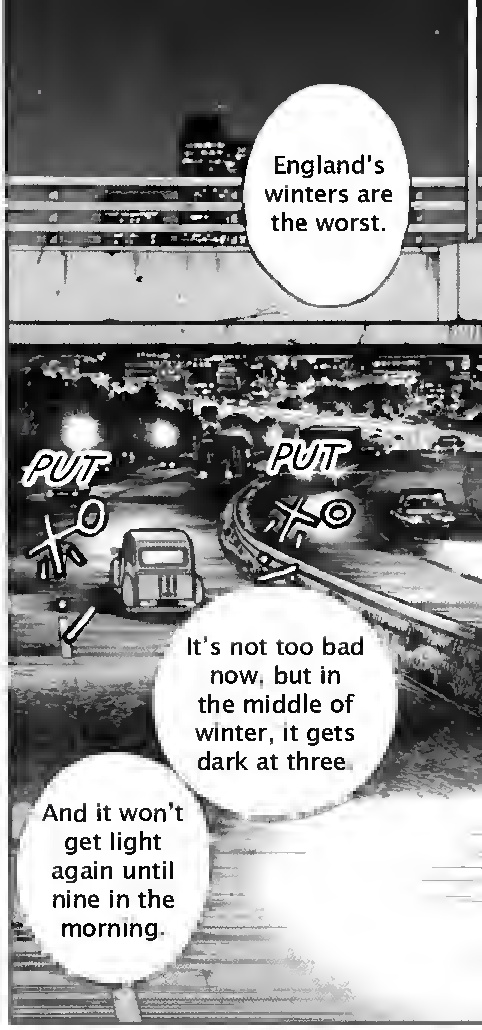


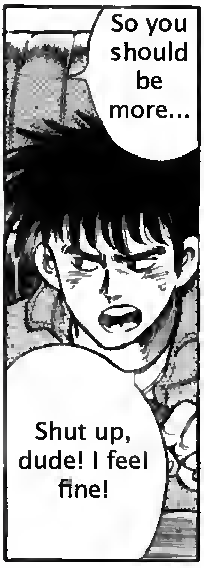
...
Here's your pay for the day.
Sign here please.
Esso
Silverstone
SRS
Racing School
SRS
The sun's already setting. The days keep getting shorter.
MUMBLE
But still, I...
What's the matter, Mr. Akagi? Can I have your signature?
Ahh!
This ain't what I came here for!
Dam-mit!
BAM

Uh-huh... He really startled me.
Have a seat here. Hey Maggie, could we get some coffee?
Calm down, kid.
What's wrong, Gunma!?
You've been doing a hell of a job here.
...
Excuse me?
Have a drink of Maggie's coffee here. It may taste bad but it won't kill you.
We think the world of you, kid. You're a hard worker.
But now the fence needs fixing.
You put on that fresh paint, cut the grass...
That Orman can sure be a hard ass, can't he?
So don't fall apart on us now.

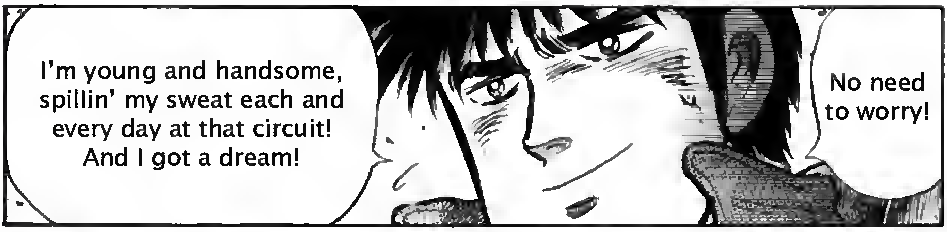
Sorry I blew up like that. Let's get outta here, Peabow.
...
Everybody's saying how great you are.
KACHUK
Bye.
The coffee was great, Maggie.
KUSHANK
Geez, pitch dark at five o'clock?
It's five.
What time is it, Peabow?

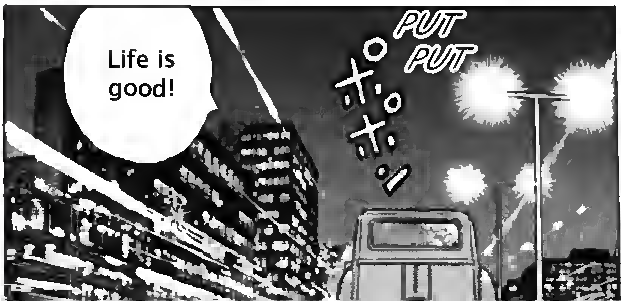

Makes me wanna cry.
It also gets really foggy and freezing.


England's winters are the worst.
PUT
PUT
It's not too bad now, but in the middle of winter, it gets dark at three.
And it won't get light again until nine in the morning.


So you should be more...
Shut up, dude! I feel fine!

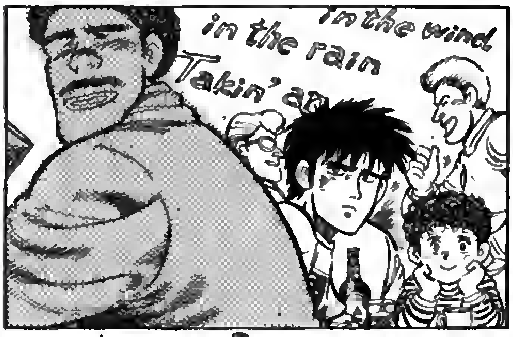
But cheer up, Gunma.
Thanks to you, I definitely won't be sad this winter.


I'm young and handsome, spillin' my sweat each and every day at that circuit! And I got a dream!
No need to worry!


Life is good!
PUT
PUT

Ha ha ha!

BWEH BWEEENG
KINGS ARMS
BUHREENG

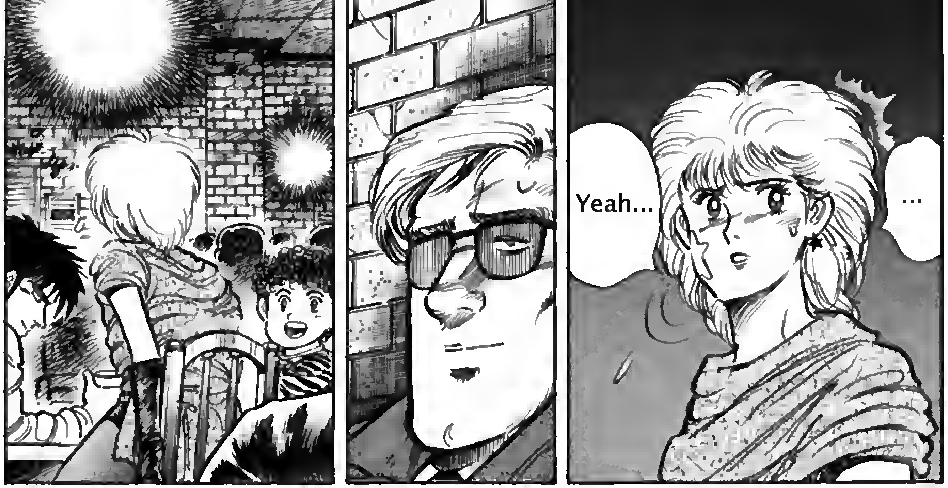

in the rain
in the wind
Takin' a

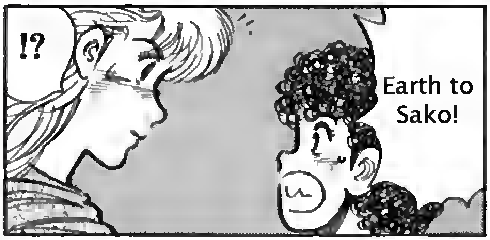
For I've be
too

STILL CAUGHT UP
BY MILLIE JACKSON

WOOHOO
CLAP
CLAP

Nope, sorry. I'm hungry. Time for a dinner break.
I'll do my last song in 10 minutes.
CLAP
You're the best, Sako! Each and every night!
Play us another one, Sako.
When are you doing an album!?
The TV stations must be falling all over you, right?
Those record companies are run by a bunch of simpletons! How could they pass up a gem like you!?
!!
Sako! Come here, quick!
George...
G...
It's been awhile, Sako.

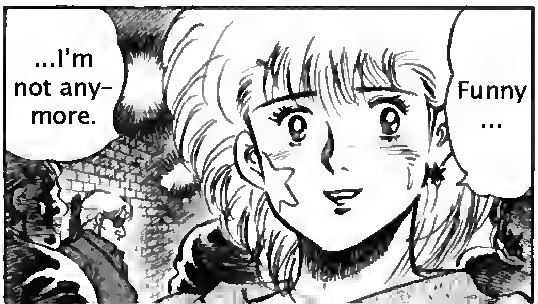

Yeah...
...


!?
Earth to Sako!

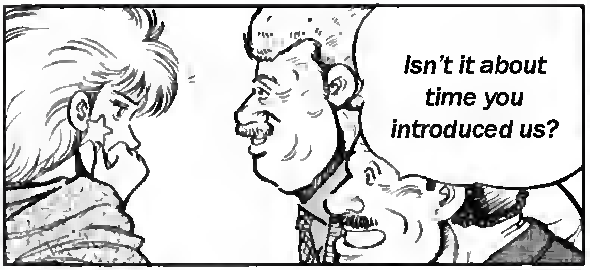
Oh Peabow. Didn't I say you don't have to wait for me?

What do you wanna eat, Sako? I'm hungry, too!
...
Looks like you're as popular as ever.

I don't have much of an appetite.
Damn straight. Dinner tastes a whole lot better when we eat together.
MENU
We gotta wait, right Gunma?

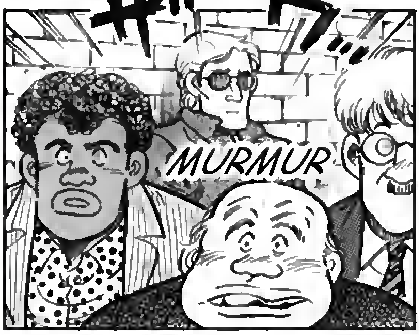

...I'm not any-more.
Funny ...

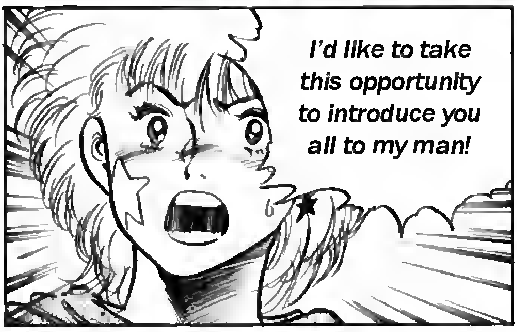
But you just said how hungry you are.
?


Isn't it about time you introduced us?

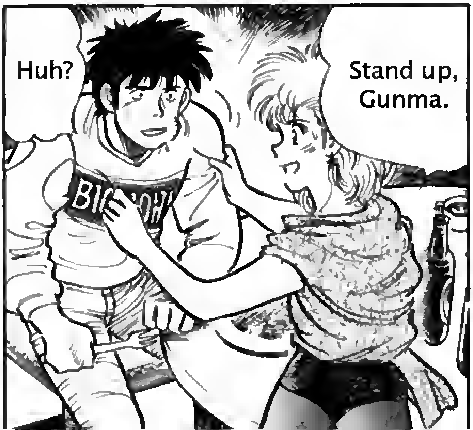
Who's that man, Sako?
We've seen you together a lot lately.

Listen up, everyone!
SHOOP


MURMUR


I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce you all to my man!

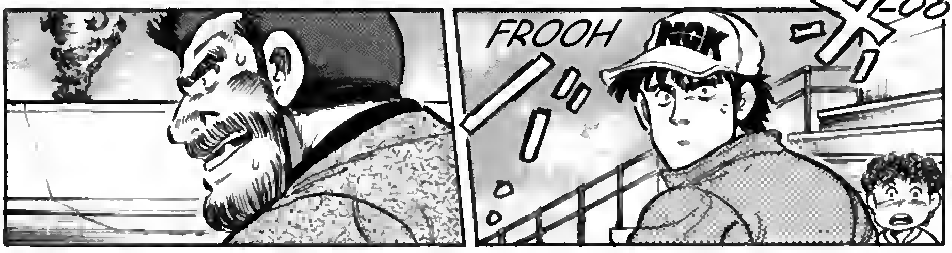
SUP
This is Gunma Akagi, an aspiring race car driver, and the love of my life!
My God!!


Huh?
Stand up, Gunma.

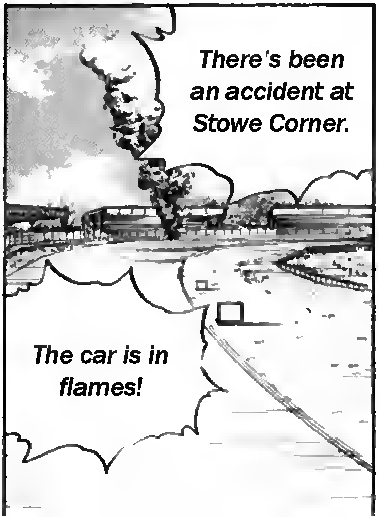
Oh!!
I'll keep on singing, for all of you. That won't ever change.
But I need the love of a special man, and I want to love him back. I need you all to understand that.
Sako...
Sako...
Our Sako...
But... you were our girl, Sako. Everything we dreamed of is everything going to be different now?
HA HA HA HA
Right! When Sako is happy, we're all happy!
Well, since this day has come, let's celebrate Sako's new-found happiness!
WOOHOO
WHISTLE
Congratulations, honey!

He'll be out of jobs soon.
It'll be summer over there soon. Lucky them, huh?
Welcome back, Orman.
How was Australia?
Racing School
The Japanese man, Akagi.
What do you mean?
SL'URP
KACHUK
I see. So he stuck around, did he?
VROOOM-
BRUBRAN'
VROOOM
People are still racing in this frigid weather?
Two private F3 teams are out there.
ZOOOM

BOOM
BSHAAAAAAW
BANG
BURUNG
BULANG
BANG

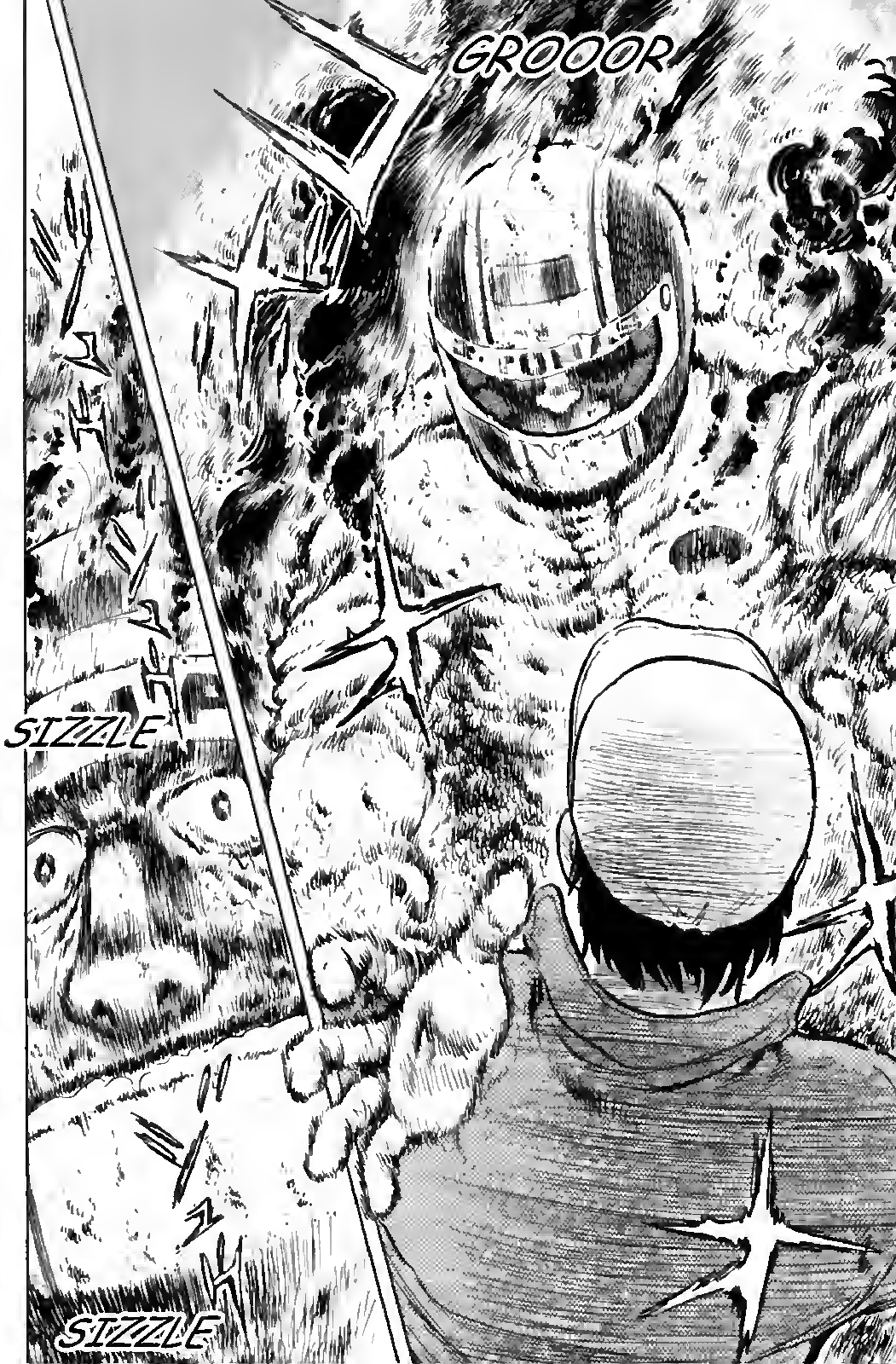

FROOH
NGK

BOOM


There's been an accident at Stowe Corner.
The car is in flames!

This is bad!
Gunma.
Somebody grab an extinguisher! Hurry!
Put out the fire!
What are you doing? Get outta there!
NGK
You'll die!
FROOAR
SHOOP
Go get help, Peabow!
Gunma...
Maybe he passed out!
Isn't there an extingui-sher in the cockpit!?

Hang in there!
Where are you!?
Hey, hey!
I can't get in there like this!
BURRR
!?
SHUK
FROOOOAR.


GROOOR
SIZZLE
SIZZLE

NO
POP POP
Woahhh!
Let go!
Let go! I'll put out the fire!
Let go of my arms!

ズダン
SLAM
ARRRRRRGH

Chapter 12:
Turning Point

RAAAH!
NOOOOOOO!

Ma...ma...
Ma...ma...
SIZZLE
SIZZLE

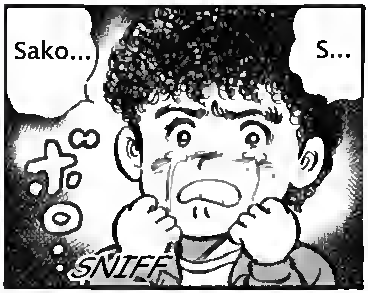
PASHOOOK

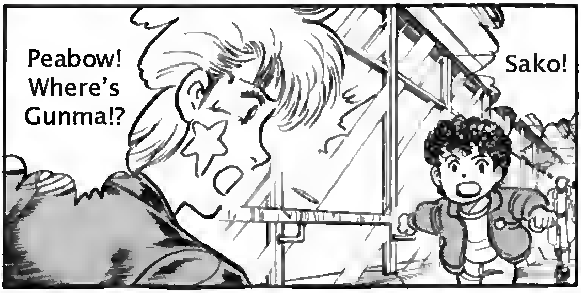
SHOOOH
SHOOOH
SIZZLE
Hurry!
POP
Damn! You all right!?
Silver Stone
Silver Stone

Are you all right!?
Gunma!
Errgh...
Aaargh!
Arrrrrrgh!

TUNK
TUNK
TUNK

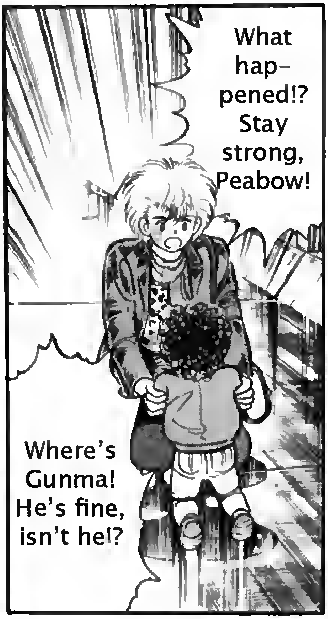
ST. Johansson Hospital
Dental Hospital

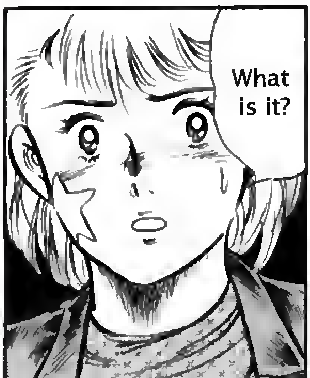

Sako...
S...
SNIFF


Peabow! Where's Gunma!?
Sako!

But...

Just some minor burns.
He's okay. Gunma's okay.
Thank God.


What hap-pened!? Stay strong, Peabow!
Where's Gunma! He's fine, isn't he!?

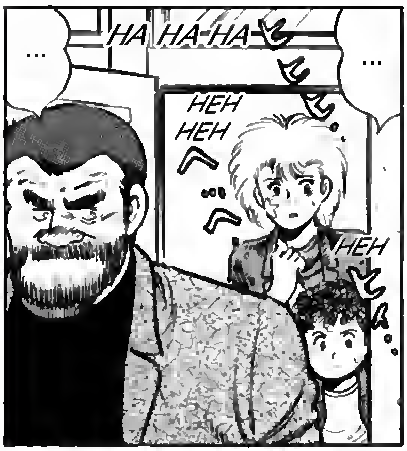

What is it?

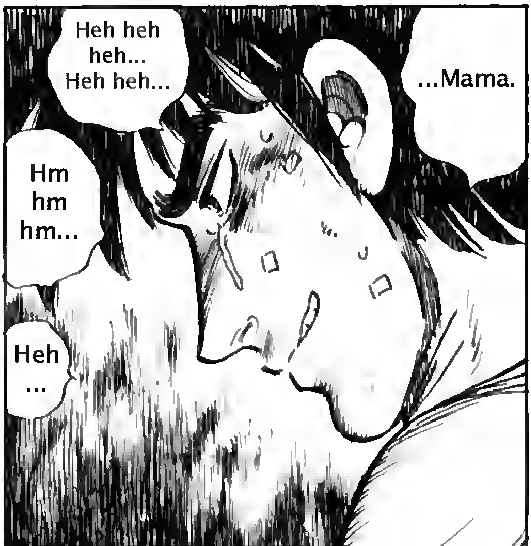
...
Gunma ...
How are you feeling?
You couldn't have helped that driver, in the state he was in.
Try not to think about it.
So stop worrying about it. Unders-tand?

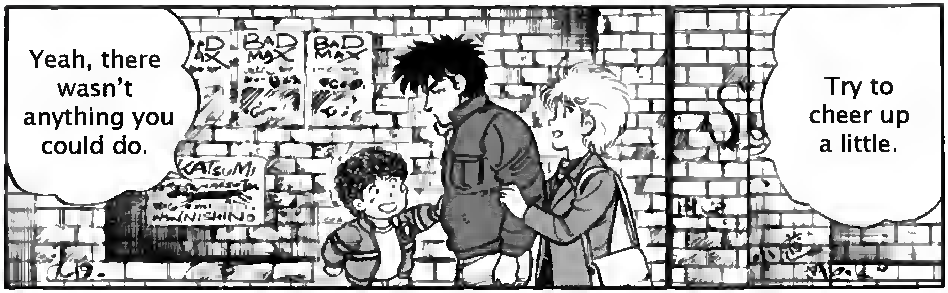
Is that the first time you've ever seen someone die?
Shut up.
I've lost two people close to me.
Then you shouldn't be scared at this point.
Mama...
I...
...I ain't scared of nothin'!
...
I ain't scared.
Not at all.

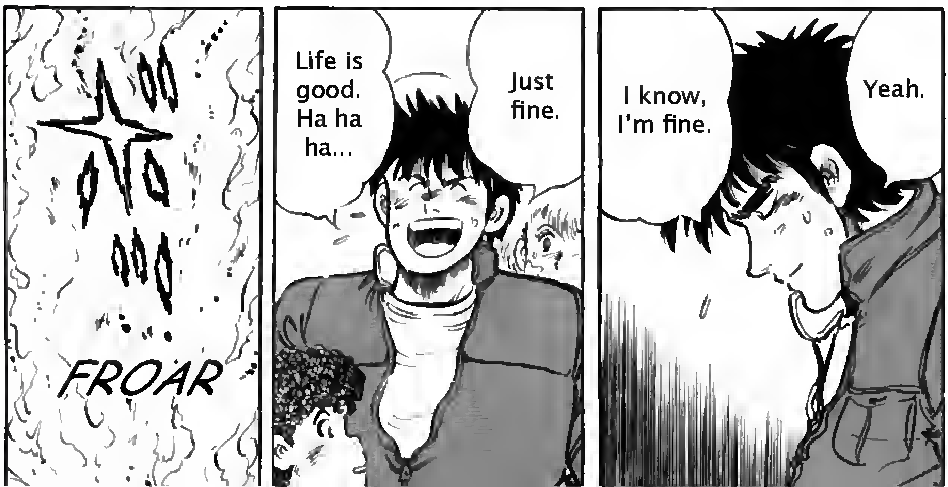
That's to be expec-ted.
Sure, it's to be expect-ed, but...
But...
...just a little shocked, that's all.
...how death...
...could be so miserable... so cold...
...and cruel... It's...
...given me a new perspec-tive.

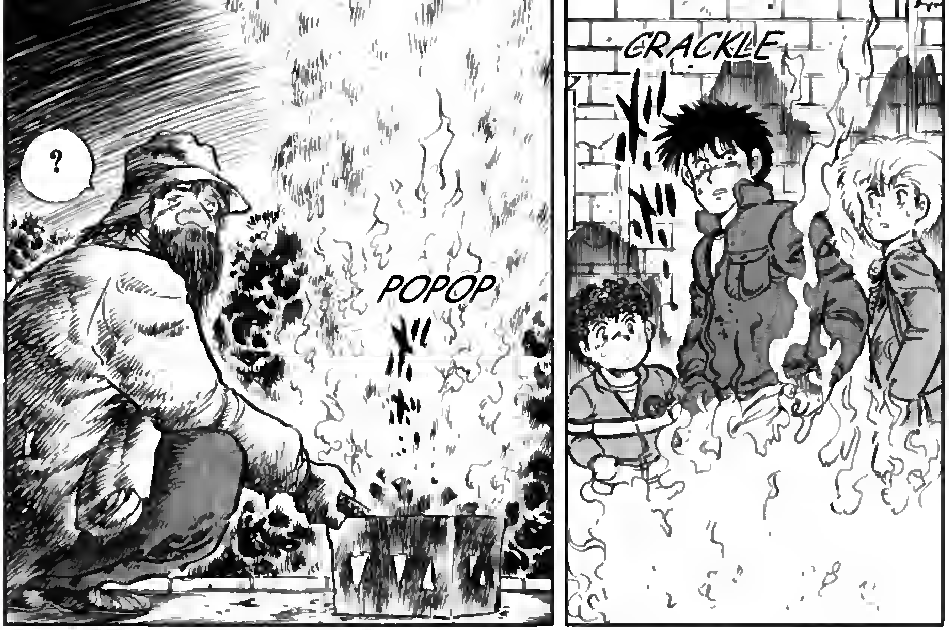
I smelled his flesh burning.
He grabbed my arms, and his hands were shaking.
Blood was runnin' from his eyes, and his skin was comin' off.
Then he looked right at me...
...while clinging to me he said...


...
HA HA-HA
...
HEH HEH
HEH


Heh heh heh... Heh heh...
...Mama.
Hm hm hm...
Heh ...


Yeah, there wasn't anything you could do.
Try to cheer up a little.


FROAR
Life is good. Ha ha ha...
Just fine.
I know, I'm fine.
Yeah.


?
POPOP
CRACKLE

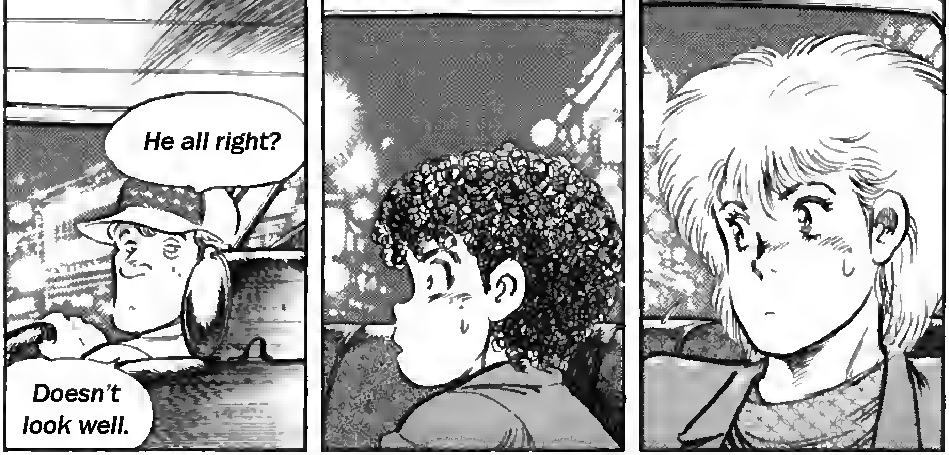
G...
Gunma
...
Arrrrhgh...
Woahhh!

It has been awhile. Yeah... I went to Australia.
Hans?
This is Orman.

Still haven't found any?
Remember when you asked if I had any F3000 drivers available?

Well I've got one for you.
Yes.

He's a Japanese kid, named Gunma Akagi. He won in Macau.
He's never raced F3000, but I've got a feeling about this kid. Would you be willing to meet him?



"F" Volume 13 THE END

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